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AN  
A N S W E R  
TO THE  
CELEBRATED LETTER  
OF THE  
DUKE OF RICHMOND  
ON A  
PARLIAMENTARY REFORM:  
WITH A  
TREATISE ON THAT POPULAR SUBJECT.

TO THE  
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ON A  
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CELEBRATED LETTER  
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DUKE OF RICHMOND  
ON A  
PARLIAMENTARY REFORM:  
WITH A  
TREATISE ON THAT POPULAR SUBJECT.

INSCRIBED TO THE  
RIGHT HONORABLE  
CHARLES BARON HAWKESBURY,  
ONE OF THE LORDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST  
HONORABLE PRIVY COUNCIL, &c. &c. &c.

*Rien n'est beau que le vrai.*

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L O N D O N:  
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M.DCC.XCIV.

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TO THE

CENTRAL

OF THE

DUKE OF RICHMOND

ON A

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

WITH A

TREATISE ON THAT POPULAR SUBJECT

INTENDED TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE

CHARLES BARON HAWKESBURY

ONE OF THE LORDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST  
HONORABLE PRIVY COUNCIL, &c. &c. &c.

And a full and complete

LONDON

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M.DCCCXIV.

# DEDICATION.

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TO THE

RIGHT HON. LORD HAWKESBURY, &c. &c.

MY LORD !

**A**N experience of more than thirty years, nearly the whole of the present mild reign, and an attentive eye to the character of your Lordship, have given me a solid knowledge of the extensive and splendid talents, that have so eminently distinguished you in various public stations ; and infinite reason to admire the anxious zeal and animated exertions of your Lordship, which have deservedly raised you to the first Rank, and to the most important Posts of Honor. Although envy and malice have, at one time, shaded the character of your Lordship, a manly and masterly perseverance in the cause of your Country, and the great merit of your public services have placed your character

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in a true light, and it being now universally acknowledged, that Lord Hawkesbury is one of the first Statesmen of the age, his splendid abilities and great public exertions are the admiration of an enlightened and grateful Nation.

A public character, founded on such brilliant talents and distinguished merit, that has the experience of so many years, is certainly the properest Judge, between the Public and Executive Government, of the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform, at a period which is unfavorable to every innovation, because it is attended with uncommon danger. My Lord, should it be said that you must necessarily be a partial Judge, from your being a Member of the Aristocratic and Executive Powers, I answer that, "as want of candor is no argument," I do not admit a conclusion that arises from illiberality: Your well known zeal and arduous exertions for the public welfare, not only justify a confidence to the contrary, but amount to a security to the nation, that the interest of the whole will have infinite more weight upon your noble mind, than prepossession in favour of either of the com-  
ponent



ponent parts of the Legislature. A Parliamentary Reform is the Hobby-Horse of Opposition: It seemed, for a long time, to be the favorite object and the ruling passion of a Nobleman of the first rank and the first rate abilities, who has written elaborately but, I think, not persuasively upon the subject; at least not so clearly as to convince my mind. His Grace's opinions have been published, and made the ground of opposition upon that subject; the Public have caught the delusion, and I conceive it is of infinite importance to the tranquility and interest of the Nation, at this period of political fanaticism, to undeceive the misinformed and credulous. To oppose a Nobleman high in office with your Lordship and of distinguished abilities, is certainly a task of some presumption, but I have the vanity to think of no great difficulty, because the impolicy and danger of Reform in the Legislature, under the present alarming circumstances of Europe, are manifest even to an ordinary capacity. Legislative Reform is an attempt to accomplish what it is, in my apprehension, the interest of the Nation and the duty of the Legislative and Executive Powers to prevent by all the



means by which so great a political suicide can be prevented.

Besides your Lordship's right to sit in Judgment in a case of so much consequence, which you so perfectly understand, I have an ambition to gratify by declaring to the World that I have the honor to be one of your oldest Admirers, and that I have, for more than thirty years, been proud to profess myself,

My Lord !

Your Lordship's

Most devoted and

Most faithful Servant,

THE AUTHOR,

A N  
A N S W E R  
T O T H E  
DUKE OF RICHMOND'S LETTER,  
On the great Subject of  
A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Respectfully inscribed to LORD HAWKESBURY, &c. &c.

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*It has ever been my Idea that every Man is under an  
Obligation to serve the Public as well as he can.*

DUKE OF RICHMOND.

**B**ESIDES a *natural* impulse to serve our Country and, in a particular manner, to promote the constitutional purposes of Liberty in a free State, there is, according to our noble Author, who holds the first rank in Society, and possesses the first rate abilities, a *necessary* obligation which carries with it an apology for incapacity; for, if a man does “as well as he can,” with the purest principles, he may be entitled to commendation for his good intentions, but cannot be blamed for inability. This apology, upon the  
best

best authority, is the most fortunate declaration in favour of my poor endeavours which must be weak indeed when compared with the splendid talents and patriotic exertions of the noble Duke: Great however, and brilliant as we acknowledge his abilities to be, he does not seem to be infallible in his opinions of a Parliamentary Reform. The celebrated Letter of the noble Duke upon this popular subject is written with his usual ability and public spirit, as a composition, but I really do not feel the truth of its being "a luminous composition," at least, although it informs me of certain distinctions it does not enlighten my mind so far as to convince me of the force of his principles and the orthodoxy of his system of Reform, when we compare them with the present state of the Legislature and the Constitution which has, by the Revolution, established the present system of Representation.

In attending to this much talked of Letter, written eleven years ago to the Irish Volunteers, which has been so highly commended by Opposition both in this Country and in Ireland, and  
which

which has by them been stiled " a constitutional and truly patriotic production," it is not necessary to consider what were, or are at present the circumstances of the Times, or what were, or are at this period the real Sentiments of the noble Author. It is sufficient to consider whether the composition be *constitutional*, that is, founded on the principles of our happy Constitution; and *patriotic* as tending to preserve that excellent Constitution, by preventing the principles of Liberty going backwards, by a perversion of the component parts of the Legislature, to destroy the wise *equilibrium* which is necessary for the preservation of the whole, and for the liberty, the security and happiness of the People living under a Constitution so well formed: For, I firmly believe that whatever is truly valuable in any Constitution with which we are acquainted exists in the fundamental principles of our own: In no Country on earth, at least in none that we have known or heard of, is better provision made for the security of the rights of individuals, and for the impartial administration of Justice. Blessed therefore with such fundamental principles, I cannot agree with Thomas Paine that  
this



this Country is without a Constitution; but am persuaded that the assertion is the grossest Libel on our Government and on the understanding of the Nation, because the reverse is manifest.

This established, as an incontrovertible fact, viz. that we are in possession of the noblest Constitution that human virtue and wisdom could form for the mild exertions of national authority, and for the happiness of the People governed; there remains to be considered first, *whether* we have, and next *in what manner* we have, by the vicissitude of things (to which human nature in the most enlightened times and consequently human establishments) departed from the so much admired principles of our excellent Constitution?

The question of *whether* we have is answered by the noble Duke, whose powerful talents and animated character give great weight to his authority; and the more so as he is a professed and steady Friend to our constitutional Government of King, Lords, and Commons. But although an attempt to reform implies a supposed departure from the principles



principles of the Constitution, which, by destroying the *equilibrium*, endangers the whole and shews both the manner of departing from it and the means of prevention; yet they seem, in this case, to be assertions without proofs, and therefore a remedy is proposed before we are convinced of the existence of the disorder.

But, if we are to suppose, for the sake of argument, the existence of the disorder in the body politic, we must then attentively consider whether the proposed remedy is both applicable and adequate, and in particular whether it be practicable and well timed? For, it will not be denied, by any candid Reformer, that there are times in which it is dangerous to attempt any alteration in long established systems however desirable it may appear and even necessary at other periods.

The fundamental principles of our Constitution are so pure and have so clear and direct a tendency to the general good that they cannot be too much admired: They have formed the happiest system of Legislation by a concurrence of the component

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parts

parts, and hence it is that our Government is established by the wisest authority and the gentlest subordination for the security and happiness of the People governed. But it is said, by Reformers and admitted by our noble Author, that "this public virtue has been perverted, and this national wisdom is in danger of being subverted by an undue influence in one of the three Estates of the Kingdom, which gives a dangerous preponderance to another; and these ascendencies in the Legislature almost absorb the other Estate, that is, the democratic part of our Government, or the People's share of Legislation and thereby endanger the system established by the Constitution at the glorious Revolution."

I answer: That the times have occasioned (as they will ever produce in the most enlightened Governments) a departure from Forms I will not hesitate to admit; but I am not so ready to allow that they have occasioned a departure from Principles: The Constitution is the same as at the Revolution; and to say the truth, and to do justice to the illustrious Family on the Throne, never has there

there appeared, under Princes of the House of Hanover, the least attempt or design to depart from the fundamental principles of the Constitution, which are an equal security to the dignity of the Crown and to the rights and happiness of the People.

The difference between forms and principles is great indeed as I will endeavour to shew. For instance: For a long period our Representation was generally annual or triennial until the great inconvenience and the evils attending *short* Parliaments rendered it necessary to have a septennial act; which, although not without its imperfections, has been continued as the best mode of Representation. Now, although the utility of that act is indisputable, it is pretended that, as the former mode was first established, it is a departure from fundamental principles of the Constitution. But this I deny; for neither short or long Parliaments have any thing to do with fundamental principles: They are forms of Legislation and not principles of the Constitution. It is therefore quite as constitutional to have the one as the other. The

only question is, which of the two modes of Representation has been found, by experience, to be the most conducive to the wise purposes of Legislation ?

I declare for the new system, because the septennial act, whatever may be its defects, avoids much of the disorder and confusion of annual or triennial Representation ; and it will be admitted that the prevention of anarchy and confusion, which have more than once occasioned a dangerous ferment is a great advantage gained in a nation of Liberty in which it is as necessary to watch the ascendancy of Democracy as the undue influence of Royalty.

By varying the length of Representation, as experience and circumstances render necessary, I see no departure whatever from fundamental principles. Sir Robert Walpole though not a popular Minister was an able Statesman ; he has clearly shewn the difference between triennial and septennial Representation and proved, to a demonstration, the advantage derived from the septennial act. A departure from forms does not  
imply



imply a departure from principles but rather a security to fundamental principles of the Constitution by a wiser system of Representation.

When therefore the Irish Volunteers formed an unconstitutional Army, or, in other words, collected a great military force unconnected with the civil Government of their Country and thereby raised a power unknown to the Constitution and incompatible with a free State, under a pretence of restoring to the Constitution its purity and vigour (as if a self established military force in a free Country, to controul opinions in matters of Legislation, was calculated to restore the principles and purity of Liberty) how could men with good understandings, and we will liberally suppose with the purest intentions, imagine that an illegal *military* force could be consistent with the Constitution of a free State and conducive to the purposes of *civil* Liberty? Their *preparatory* steps  
 “ to forward their intentions on the subject of a  
 “ more equal Representation of the People in Par-  
 “ liament” being of a military and compulsive nature in a civil case of Legislation in a free State,  
 must



must be considered as ineffectual as they were unconstitutional, illegal and alarming. All steps for a Reform in a free Nation should be of a civil nature, for military steps are of the nature of an absolute and arbitrary Government. For instance: The municipal power might exercise its influence with the greatest propriety and the happiest effect because it is a power known to the Constitution; but a self created military authority, not congenial with civil Liberty, defeats its own purpose by acting contrary to the purity of principles which it wishes to promote. I do therefore pronounce the preparatory steps of an armed force, unconnected with and consequently unauthorized by the civil Government as impolitic as they are unconstitutional; and that although the noble Duke has been a spirited advocate for a Parliamentary Reform, I do not feel the force of the popular observation that "his Grace has offered to the Nation a system  
 " of the most complete and effectual reform in the  
 " Representation of the People that ever has been  
 " proposed;" or that he has discovered great Constitutional knowledge in countenancing such an  
 unconstitutional

unconstitutional and illegal power as the Military Association of the Irish Volunteers.

Having shewn that the Irish Volunteers who corresponded with the Duke of Richmond on the great subject of a Parliamentary Reform were totally mistaken in their "preparatory steps of a *military* nature which instead of restoring the "purity of the Constitution tend to subvert it;" I proceed to consider whether they were not equally mistaken in "their ideas of a more "equal Representation of the People in Parliam<sup>t</sup>." "ment."

Their ideas of *unequal* Representation are founded on the pretended "corrupt state of the Boroughs, "and the general opinion of the People, that the "Constitution can be restored to its ancient purity "and vigour by *no* other means than a Parliam<sup>t</sup> "mentary Reform." This supposed corruption and the pretended sense of the Public prove nothing: For, admitting the former, the People are not the proper judges of the latter; neither is their opinion so easily collected or so easily known. The  
 opinion

opinion of the People, I mean the real and judicious Public, is respectable but not conclusive. The collective body or the Public at large have the right of contemplation and the liberty of communication but not the power of decision. Those who delegate their authority, and surrender all their Constitutional rights, irrecoverably for a certain period, cannot themselves exercise the one or claim the other consistent with the nature of delegation and with the obligation which the Constitution imposes. The opinion of the People, which is so often mentioned by Party, is an imaginary thing. The true sense of the Nation is manifested by an acquiescence in the measures of Executive Government. It is fixed by conviction and manifested by compliance and tacit consent. The opinion of the multitude is another thing: It is always speculative and restless. But the sense of the real Public is steady and respectable. That opinion of the People is best known at constitutional periods when they have, by means of the constituent body, the power of deciding from experience and conviction: And if they do not then exercise the right with judgment the blame must be imputed to them and not

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to a radical defect in Representation. At no other period can the general and real opinion of the People be known. It is therefore a system of Reform peculiar to Irishmen, to restore the purity of the Constitution by a popular ferment and by preparatory steps of an unconstitutional and military force in a free State. A simple question will shew the folly and danger of this Irish military method of reforming the Parliament. Suppose the national forces (which I will call the constitutional Army, because it is connected with the civil Government of this Country) were to take it into their heads to be judges of the corruption of the Boroughs and of the sense of the People about the state of Representation, and were to take preparatory steps, as the Irish Volunteers have done, unconnected as they are with civil Government, to bring about an alteration in the most essential part of the Legislature, to shake Legislation to its foundation, would not such *military* interference be deemed unconstitutional and alarming in a free State?

That there is corruption in this Nation from the influx of wealth and the force of luxury, venality



and ambition (as there has ever been and will ever be in the greatest and wisest Nations) there can be no doubt; but we have an act against Bribery and Corruption, and therefore if we have the evils natural to great and wealthy Nations we have also the remedy. Corruption which is the growth of Luxury can never be rooted out in an age of Luxury, it is therefore to be guarded against; but, that cure must be as ineffectual as it is desperate which raises a great ferment to overthrow the Constitution under a pretence of restoring its purity. If there be no other means of restoring the purity of the Constitution than a Parliamentary Reform, I believe I shall not be a false prophet if, with the foresight of a Scotchman, I say it will never be restored. My reasons are two: Because I conceive the disorder is not in the system of Representation but in the principle of the constituent Body; and second, because it cannot be reasonably expected that the Commons will at any period become *Felo de se*, or that the Peers will relinquish their interest or the Crown its influence, which being almost impossible renders the Reform impracticable: For while these two estates

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of the Kingdom unite to preserve their ascendancy in the choice of the People's Representatives; how is it possible that a Reform can be accomplished which requires the surrender of both? An alteration in the system of Representation cannot be effected by dint of persuasion: All the eloquence of ancient and modern oratory could not persuade the other two Estates of the Kingdom to relinquish their interest in and influence over the House of Commons. And as to short Parliaments which are so much contended for as a constitutional right and a necessary check upon the People's delegates to preserve the purity and vigor of the Constitution, I would ask, if the septennial act was repealed and triennial or annual Parliaments restored, whether that concession to popular opinion would be a remedy against corruption? Would it root out the seeds of venality and destroy the effects of luxury? If then a change in the period of Delegation would produce exactly the same principles, what would be got by the Reform more than the calamity arising from the ferment? Or if, besides gaining this point of short Parliaments, the state of Representation became altered and ex-

tended in proportion to the universality of suffrage what would be the effect? Would it destroy corruption in the constituent Body or prostitution of principle in a more extended Representation? The very reverse is the most probable. The advantages of Democracy are seldom used with judgement. As the popular authority, like the popular mind, is of an unsteady nature, its restless spirit is exposed to every temptation; and experience teaches that the evils arising from delusion and prostitution have increased in proportion to the People's ascendancy in Government. Universality of voting, extension of Representation and short Parliaments, are admirably calculated to promote the confusion and horrors of Democracy, by giving equality to the thoughtless, restless and tyrannic Multitude, but are no security for those principles of public Virtue which are necessary to preserve the equilibrium of the Legislature and to restore the purity of the Constitution.

But, although I do not admit the existence of the disorder nor, by consequence, the necessity of a cure, I will consider the proposed remedy with candor.

candor. My noble Author says, that " the subject  
 " of a Parliamentary Reform is, that which of all  
 " others deserves, in his opinion, the attention of the  
 " public, conceiving it would include every other  
 " advantage which a nation can wish." But I have  
 not the honor to be of the same opinion: For, admitting the disorder in our Constitution to exist, that is, that the equilibrium of our Legislature is destroyed and the principles of liberty gone backwards, we must, in that case, look for a practicable, effectual and permanent remedy in the People's share of Legislation and not in the People themselves. For, although they have unquestionably a right, through the constituent Body, to instruct their delegates, they have none to reform Representation. The subject of Reform may deserve the most serious attention of the delegated power to guard against the effects of corruption (against which they have made an excellent law) but can never properly claim the attention of the collective Body; who, by delegating their power, commit, with their interest, their care to their Representatives: And if their delegates are found unfaithful to the great trust, the constituent Body have at stated periods  
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the greatest of all remedies in their own hands; namely, the power of dismissal and the choice of such as they think more deserving of their confidence.

I do not therefore think that a *popular* Reform of Parliament is constitutional, or that, were it practicable, it would produce all the advantage nor indeed any of the advantages which a Nation could wish. I am therefore astonished and alarmed at the doctrine of that Nobleman who is pleased to say—"I have no hesitation in declaring, that from  
 " every consideration I have been able to give to  
 " this great question which for many years has occupied my mind and from every day's experience to the present hour," (15th of August 1783) "I am more and more convinced that the  
 " *restoring* the right of voting universally to every  
 " Man, not incapacitated by nature for want of  
 " reason or by law for the commission of crimes,  
 " together with *annual* elections is the only Reform  
 " that is practicable, or that can be effectual and  
 " permanent."

Before the noble Duke dwelt so emphatically on  
 the



the wisdom of *restoring* the universal right of suffrage, his Grace might have had the goodness to shew when we possessed that universality and how we lost it. In my mind the noble Author's doctrine of universality does not fall short of Paine's Rights of Man to Equality. I am therefore of a quite contrary opinion to that distinguished character and am fully persuaded that of all plans of Reform, this is the most unnecessary and impracticable. His Grace says "all other plans, that are of a palliative nature, have been found insufficient to interest and *animate* the great Body of the People, from whose earnestness alone any Reform can be expected." To interest the great Body of the People to espouse any plan of political speculation, and to animate them to carry it into execution, is like the principles of the French Revolution which have animated the public at large to overthrow their religious and civil establishments, instead of reforming their Government: For it is the nature of Democracy, under colour of the best principles to produce the greatest confusion and mischief, not knowing where to stop when the great Body of the People is raised and has gained an ascendancy. And therefore

therefore if from them alone a Reform is to be expected, it must be such as cannot be too much dreaded from the shocking example of the great Body of the People in France, who have, under the same pretence of universal and equal rights, been guilty of the greatest errors and the most calamitous events.

- “ A long exclusion from any share in the Legislature of their Country has rendered the great
- “ Mass of the People indifferent whether the *monopoly* that subsists continues in the hands of a
- “ more or less extended company ; or whether it
- “ is divided by them into shares of somewhat more
- “ or less just proportions.” I cannot assent to the
- opinion of the noble Author, that “ the People have
- “ long been excluded from Representation,” since it
- is evident that they have never been deprived of
- the democratic part of our Government. Had the
- People’s share of Legislation been set aside, or their
- great constituent Rights suspended as in the case of
- long Parliaments under the Stuarts, then indeed it
- might with truth be said that “ the great Body of
- “ the People were excluded from any share of the
- “ Legislature

"Legislature of their Country." But although the doctrine of universal right of suffrage has never been adopted, or is likely ever to be adopted to give equality to the thoughtless and restless multitude, it cannot be said with truth that the People have been excluded from any share of Legislation, when they have, since the Revolution, possessed the power of Representation which is all the People's right or share in the legislature of their Country.

I am really at a loss to understand what the noble Duke means by a *Monopoly*: The constitutional powers of King, Lords and Commons cannot be called a Monopoly of power; because, as they are distinct authorities and a check on each other, they have nothing of the nature of a monopoly, which absorbs the whole in the vortex of its all grasping and over-grown power. But if his Grace means the Borough interest, under the influence of the Peers and the Crown which gives to Executive Government so great an ascendancy in the House of Commons, even then, "if it be indifferent to  
 " the People whether Representation continues in  
 " the hands of a more or less extended Company"

where is the use of that alteration which is proposed by Reformation? That indifference must arise from the People's not feeling any inconvenience from that supposed monopoly of interest, and their acquiescing in a system founded on practice preferable to a visionary one founded on theory. They know that political speculation is delusive and hazardous, and therefore they prefer by tacit consent, the blessings of a system founded on experience to the possible but uncertain advantages of innovation. I believe this is the sense of an enlightened Nation; who, upon the principle of a Commercial People, prefer a real security for their Rights and Property to a precarious one. They wisely acquiesce in the present state of Representation knowing that the defect is a speck in the eye of the Constitution which should be touched with a trembling hand. As Experience is the best informer, so Time is the best reformer. "His head was silver'd o'er with age, and long experience made him sage." Whenever the sagacity of Time interposes, the alteration must be in the principle and not in the universality of suffrage, for an elective franchise that creates an equality with the multitude is a dreadful idea that fills our minds



minds with horror because it differs in nothing to the absurd and ruinous doctrine of the Rights of Man.

The noble Duke says "the Public feels itself  
 " unconcerned in the division of Representation  
 " into shares of somewhat more or less just proportions except as to the *oppressions* it endures  
 " and the *exactions* it suffers; which must continue  
 " so long as the People remain deprived of all  
 " controul over their Representatives."

As to the oppressions which the Public endure, it will hardly be credited, even upon the testimony of so distinguished an Author, that a Government founded on the happiest Constitution and so much admired for impartial Laws and substantial Justice, can be oppressive; or that the exactions of the Legislature are greater than the absolute necessity of the State and the abilities of the People will admit. But were it otherwise, would any alteration in Representation prevent them? And it is hard to conceive how the People can be deprived of all controul over their Representatives

when they possess the greatest controul, namely, the power of dismission every seven years besides other chances,

“ This indifference and total unconcern of the  
 “ People has been deemed,” says his Grace,  
 “ a proof of their acquiescence with and satisfac-  
 “ tion in the present form of Elections and state  
 “ of Representation: But the truth is the People  
 “ have been so often deceived that they will  
 “ scarcely trust any set of men, and nothing but  
 “ self evident conviction that a measure tends  
 “ effectually to the recovery of their rights can in-  
 “ terest them in its favour.”

That the People have been and still continue to be deceived by specious systems of speculation is a truth of too serious a nature to be denied; and that they distrust both the projects and the principles of every class of Reformers is as natural as it is true; wisely adhering to the substance of established Representation in preference to the shadow of delusive theory. But as they can never be convinced that they are deprived of all share of  
 Legislation,

Legislation, or all right of controul over the Representatives, against the evidence of their senses, they can never have the interest which Reformers wish them to possess to animate them to the recovery of rights which they have not lost and of which, to do them justice, they do not complain.

As a proof how little the People are convinced of the loss of their legislative rights and how little they are disposed to seek a remedy for an imaginary disorder, the noble Duke candidly confesses that  
 “ not a single Profelyte has been gained, nor has  
 “ the least ray of hope been held out from any  
 “ quarter that the House of Commons were inclined to adopt any mode of Reform whatever.”  
 This is natural enough for two obvious reasons: One, because they see, from their own experience and the sense of their Constituents, no necessity for any Reform in the People’s share of the Legislature; and the other, because we cannot reasonably expect the House to be *Felo de se*, or that the aristocratic and executive powers will forego the advantages of their interest and influence.

fluence. From those quarters therefore the noble Duke declares, with the best reasons in the world, that he has nothing to hope. "IT IS FROM  
 " THE PEOPLE AT LARGE THAT I  
 " EXPECT ANY GOOD."

This exclamation seems to be an invitation to the great Body of the People upon the universal doctrine of *Paine*. It is a general appeal to the passions of the People to claim universal rights which have done so much mischief. If the noble Duke means the Multitude of the Nation, I think there cannot be a more delusive and dangerous doctrine. The universal claim of the collective Body seldom does any good, but generally occasions a great deal of confusion and mischief. And the system that levels all distinctions, by giving the Multitude an equal right in Representation, is truly dreadful when suggested and supported by such high authority. And when the noble Duke adds that " the only way to make the  
 " great Mass of the People, or the great Multi-  
 " tude *feel* that they are really concerned in the  
 " business of Representation is to contend for  
 " their



" their *full, clear and indisputable rights of universal*  
 "*Representation,*" our apprehensions become alarm-  
 ing and our astonishment is beyond expression.  
 To make the People *feel* their weight and the  
 Multitude their equality is to invite them to that  
 resistance which is not consistent with what they  
 owe to established Government and to the public  
 peace and security. It is a new doctrine founded  
 upon false principles, of the most poisonous na-  
 ture, which the present unhappy times shew to be  
 as dangerous in its application as it is ruinous in its  
 principle. When the noble Author so boldly  
 asserted " the People's indisputable right of univer-  
 " sal suffrage," his Grace should first have ascer-  
 tained their right and shewn, beyond a doubt, on  
 what it is founded, and in what manner it has been  
 violated. As we have not this information I am  
 so clearly persuaded to the contrary, I mean, that  
 they possess no such right of election, that I  
 really think the doctrine of universality, as laid  
 down by the noble Duke, is like that of Equality  
 suggested by Paine; a doctrine that seems to be as  
 dangerous as it is new and impracticable. It is a  
 doctrine of disorder and confusion which flows like  
 a torrent

a torrent from anarchy, a term synonymous with the universality of the Duke of Richmond and the Equality of the Rights of Man. To take the sense of the People is an experiment in Government at all times dangerous, and infinitely more so at present, it being subversive of good order and established systems as we see by its dreadful effects in France. As the People have delegated their rights to Representatives the sense of the Public can only be known through their Delegates. An appeal to the People, inviting them to contend for rights which they have deputed and totally surrendered, is incompatible with Representation and subversive of the established system of Government and the Constitution we so much admire.

“ If the Parliament be a *corrupt* Body, that has  
 “ *usurped* the Rights of the People—to propose any  
 “ plan of Reform to be adopted by that Parlia-  
 “ ment would be as absurd as fruitless. The pro-  
 “ position therefore ought to be solely to the  
 “ COUNTRY that is *oppressed* and not to the OP-  
 “ PRESSORS of the Country.” This falacious  
 reasoning

reasoning is unbecoming an enlightened and spirited Nation, it is the delusive reasoning of Party. *If* the Parliament be corrupt and *if* it has usurped the Rights of the People, are two suppositions without a single proof and indeed without a positive charge. How absurd is the idea of the Parliament usurping the Rights of the People when it is evident they possess no authority but what is delegated to them by the People: And so truly ridiculous are the ideas of corruption and usurpation that was the Parliament to be dissolved, there is every reason to believe that the People would themselves refute the charges by returning the very same persons to Parliament as the Representatives of their choice, in whose public virtue they can place the most confidence. As to "the appeal solely to the Country" that is oppressed and not to the oppressors of the "Country," it is a wanton charge of national *oppression* that has no existence, and as wanton an attack on men who have obtained and deserve the confidence of their Constituents. It is an appeal to the mass of the People upon the principle of the French without any of the causes that led to that Revolution. It is a proposition to arm the People

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without

without any inducement for resistance to the constitutional and constituted authorities ; for there is no proof of oppression nor of who are the oppressors, but the *reverse* from the flourishing state of the Nation, the full enjoyment of Liberty and Property and the great weight of this Country in the scale of Europe to preserve the balance of power. A proposition therefore so unnecessary, so unjust, so unconstitutional and analogous with the horrid system of France can only be suggested, at a period like the present, by the greatest enemies to our Constitution and the greatest Traitors to our Country,

Few, I verily believe, will be the Votaries to the new doctrine of " universal suffrage," notwithstanding the opinion of so able a Statesman as the Duke of Richmond, who is so well acquainted with the principles of our Constitution and the policy of our Government. " I call them the People's " rights of Universal Representation," says the noble Duke, " not only from my own conviction, " but from the admission of the friends of a more " confined plan who admit that our claims are " founded



“ founded on the true principles of the Constitution  
 “ and only object to them on account of imprac-  
 “ ticability.” These rights insisted upon by the  
 noble Author and admitted by his friends to be  
 founded on the true principles of the Constitution  
 are nevertheless of the most doubtful kind, at least  
 I have no conviction in my mind of their existence  
 or of their consistency with the Constitution. In-  
 deed a system that is confessed to be impracticable  
 has not only the strongest objection but brings the  
 strongest presumption that its impracticability arises  
 from its not being founded on the true principles  
 of the Constitution ; since, whatever is founded on  
 those principles must, at one period or other, be  
 practicable.

Personal suffrage, or universality of elective  
 franchise is not, as the noble Duke supposes, a  
 principle of our Constitution but contrary to its  
 spirit and constant practice, as I will endeavour to  
 shew : The People consist of the collective, the  
 constituent and representative Bodies : The former  
 delegate their authority to the second and these to  
 the third, as the general rights and for the general

purposes of the great mass of the People; commonly called the Nation. Here then is general delegation and consequently universal Representation though not universal Suffrage, for that is as inadmissible as it would be impracticable. Here is a great constitutional power, as the People's share of Legislation, over which they have constitutional controul, and more they cannot expect, because they are not entitled to more from the purest principles of our excellent Constitution. His Grace does not seem to be aware of the great and necessary distinction between the collective and the constituent Bodies. It is of the greatest importance to be understood, for on that barrier depends the right and security of the People. An attempt to confound the one with the other, by making the elective as numerous as the collective, would destroy it, and make an inroad to overthrow our Government and bring upon this Nation the calamities of France.

Nevertheless the noble Duke, in support of his favorite system for universal Representation, says that "the more extensive plan at the same time  
" that

“ that its operation is more compleat depends on  
 “ *a more effectual support that of the People.*” I must  
 again beg leave to observe that the purity of the  
 principle and not the extension of a plan is the most  
 to be regarded; and it's effectual support must de-  
 pend on it's conformity to our Constitution and  
 not on the clamor of the multitude which is incon-  
 sistent with it. The effectual support of the People  
 to change Representation is nothing less than their  
 setting aside Delegation and taking into their own  
 hands the power of Legislation, which is an idea  
 that strikes us with horror, as the event would be  
 dreadful. I do not admit that extended Represen-  
 tation is either more constitutional or more com-  
 pleat than one judiciously contracted; and so far  
 am I from admitting the right of universal suffrage,  
 or the advantages resulting from the elective fran-  
 chise of every man not incapacitated by nature or  
 law, that I really think the proposed extension to  
 universality, which depends on the support of the  
 People and the voice of the Multitude, is to be  
 dreaded as the greatest political pestilence. The  
 People at large are not proper judges and when  
 recourse is had to them for their vigorous support  
 to

to procure a system of Government, the remedy is worse than the disorder, by appealing to that worst of all Tyrants the Sovereign Mobility, who are the Heroes of universal suffrage, and of universal confusion.

“ At a numerous and respectable Meeting of  
 “ the Friends to a constitutional Reform in 1782,  
 “ present the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, &c.  
 “ &c. it was resolved that the motion of the  
 “ Honorable Mr. Pitt for the appointment of a  
 “ Committee to enquire into the state of Representation of the People of Great Britain, and to  
 “ report the same to the House; and also what  
 “ steps it might be necessary to take, having been  
 “ defeated by a motion for the order of the day,  
 “ it became indispensably necessary that application should be made to Parliament by *Petitions*  
 “ *from the collective Body of the People*, in their respective districts, requesting a substantial Reform of the House of Commons.”

But notwithstanding the testimony of such high authority as the present Chancellor of the Exchequer,



chequer, the Master General of the Ordnance, the Duke of Norfolk and other distinguished characters then and now in the two Houses of Parliament, I maintain that the application, by means of Petitions from the collective Body, was neither constitutional or necessary; because the voice of the People can only be heard through the organ of their Representation, and therefore all attempts to rouse the collective body of the People, regardless of the constituent authority exercised on their behalf, to support a system of speculation, must be considered as attempts to create a ferment and to endanger the Constitution.

The motion of Mr. Pitt was constitutional and regular, but the resolution founded upon its miscarriage was as unconstitutional as it must ever prove ineffectual. Nor can the sense of the People be at any time, or in any manner taken but at the time of Election or through their Representatives: For the sense and rights of the People are absorbed by the delegation of the popular interest and authority during the term of Representation. And there cannot be an idea more preposterously  
 absurd

absurd than to call upon the People to assist in violating their Delegation and shaking the very foundation of their Constitution. For, although the Advocates of such a solecism in Government contend that, without Parliamentary Reform, neither the Liberty of the Nation, or the permanency of Government can be secured, I maintain a contrary opinion and contend that nothing can so effectually destroy the one and subvert the other as universal suffrage (which makes no distinction between the collective and constituent bodies of the People) or as the proposed method of taking the sense of the Nation by Petitions, from the great mass of the Community, which is not only irregular (after delegating all their rights and constitutional authority) and groundless, but subversive of the right of Representation and the principles of the Constitution; which, although calculated for the good of the public at large were never intended to give equality to the Multitude and the reins of Government to the People.

There are spots in the Sun and blemishes in Beauty; and as human wisdom has not reached infallibility the noblest Institutions are imperfect,

for

for perfection is not the lot of human nature. I am happy however to say that the imperfections we discover in Legislation are like the little blemishes of a great beauty, and arise more from the effects of luxury in a great and wealthy Nation than from a radical defect or a principle subversive of the democratic part of our excellent Constitution. That Constitution has formed a state of popular Representation, which has claimed the admiration of the wisest nations and the envy of mankind, and that monument of national wisdom may be compared to a noble edifice the work of time. It is, therefore, as great an error in reformers as it would be in architects to think of repairing the edifice by sapping the foundation. The component parts are beautifully designed and ably executed, forming together the noblest superstructure. If time which varies circumstances and discovers the operation of all things should, by various causes, impair the parts, or should the force of all powerful luxury pervert the noblest design and render a reform an object of national attention, then like the wise and great architect of the universe, we should be inspired by virtue and animated by

wisdom to repair defects by means that shall not endanger the foundation and overthrow the whole edifice, for then a supposed or partial evil would become a general calamity.

“ I have never heard,” said a worthy Magistrate, “ of any plan of Legislative Reformation but  
 “ what became impracticable from principles more  
 “ dangerous than those intended to be reformed.  
 “ Not one of them would have added a particle of  
 “ happiness and security to the People; but all  
 “ would have endangered the liberty, the property  
 “ and security we enjoy under the long established  
 “ system of Representation which wisely makes a  
 “ great and necessary distinction between the collective and constituent Bodies, and which has  
 “ produced all the happiness we have enjoyed by  
 “ the Revolution.” If that glorious event has rendered this manufacturing, commercial and maritime Nation happy, great and flourishing; if our national credit is great beyond example and we hold the first rank among the Powers of Europe, fickle indeed should we be and blind to our own interest, were we to change a system of Representation that,  
 for



for such a length of time has done so much good, for a delusive plan that is visionary and impracticable and which even in the attempt must do a great deal of mischief by making the people feel the strength of their resistance and the multitude the force of their equality. Want of charity is no argument. If therefore we liberally admit the good intention of the reformers we must lament their inability: For, if the principles or motives that actuate them are good, the principles on which they ground a Reform are bad. The great error of the whole race of Reformers seems to consist in confounding the beautiful order of things. They appeal to the collective Body regardless of the constituent which is a distinct Body and the soul of Representation. It is therefore an appeal to the passions of the multitude and not to the sense of the real public. The collective Body have absolutely no political existence: And as they have no rights to be endangered they can have none to defend. They have natural rights which are protected by the laws, but their constitutional rights are, by a tacit delegation, absorbed by the constituent part of the Nation. The idea that every

man, not incapacitated by nature or law, as a fool or a knave, (though all knaves and fools are not disqualified) is intitled by the Constitution to the elective franchise, is quite as new and absurd as the People's feeling the necessity of resistance and the multitude the right of equality, principles which are as erroneous as the system founded on them would be dangerous. Those who call the voice of the People the voice of God, who talk of the Majesty of the People and the supremacy of the collective Body abuse the understanding and sacrifice the interest of the Nation to promote the designs of party. The voice of the People is no where to be found but in the constituent Body prior to Election and in Representation subsequently. The People are ever passive and never can be active without convulsing the Nation, subverting the Legislature and overthrowing constitutional Government. When therefore such great Statesmen as the late Lord Chatham and the present Duke of Richmond talked (at certain periods of popular enthusiasm) so much of the voice of the People and the support of the collective Body, I lamented the folly of great men and the credulity of little men :

men: For I contend that as the collective Body can have no constitutional rights after they are delegated by the elective Body, so they can have no voice to condemn nor any right or authority to reform. It is ridiculous to suppose that they can possess or be invested by the Constitution with any voice or right after the exercise of delegation by the constituent power of the Nation.

The great partiality of the Duke of Richmond to his own system of personal or universal suffrage, leads him to say that "the great objection to all  
 " other plans of Reform is that they are partial  
 " and *unequal*; a vast quantity of the Community  
 " is still left unrepresented and its most essential  
 " concerns, life, liberty and property continue in  
 " the absolute disposal of those whom they do not  
 " chuse and over whom they have no controul."  
 But this is far from being a fair state of the case. The words partial and unequal are misapplied. The elective right is certainly and necessarily partial that is local, and unequal that is contracted; but Representation is general and impartial in its operation. Were the purposes of Representation  
 confined

confined to those who have the elective franchise it would then be partial and unequal, but that cannot possibly be the case when it is known that although Representatives are chosen for particular places, they impartially represent the interest of the whole Nation as attentively and effectually as if chosen by places that have not the elective franchise. For instance: Mr. Pitt is chosen for Cambridge and Mr. Fox for Westminster. If their attention was confined to their Constituents it would be partial and unequal Representation; but if it is extended to all the concerns of the Nation it must be impartial and equal. Forms may have the appearance of partiality from their locality but Representation is general and impartial, extending alike to the whole Community the blessings of the Constitution and the benefit of the Laws.

Partial and unequal suffrage, on which the constituent or elective power is founded, may be admitted with more propriety than partial and unequal Representation; and, to speak like an honest man, who is under no other influence than that of truth and public virtue, scorning equally to be  
the



the Sycophant of Power or the Tool of Party, could a more general and equal state of suffrage be adopted (God forbid I should here mean either universality or equality but more proportionate) without a ferment and without endangering the tranquility of Society and the beautiful order of things it would be desirable; but even the attempt at Innovation with the very best design would be hazardous; and more especially in times like the present which being favourable to disorders in every State, is the most unfit period for any alteration whatever. In the mean time it is fair to observe that the partial and unequal state of Representation is more in the form than in the principle and therefore it is not attended with the unhappy consequences described by the Advocates for Reform: For, although a vast quantity of the Community have no votes, that is, no share in the constituent authority, they are, as I have shewn, upon a footing of equality in the representative power. It cannot therefore be said that they are left unrepresented, possessing no share of Legislation, when by general Representation they enjoy equally with the rest, the impartiality of the Laws and the blessings of the Constitution,

stitution, exactly in the same manner as if the system of universal suffrage was adopted: And if it is evident that those who have not, by the present state of Representation, a vote at Elections are as effectually represented as those who have that local advantage, although not by men of their own choice; and if by that general Representation of the Nation they participate equally in all the blessings of the Constitution and the impartiality of the Laws, where is the grievance that requires Innovation? Does it not prove that a Parliamentary Reform is more a matter of speculation than of absolute necessity? That it arises more from party motives than from public principles? Is it not owing to a conviction of this sort that Mr. Pitt has renounced it as impracticable and abandoned it as unnecessary? Nay as delusive and dangerous by having for its object universal Representation upon the frantic principle of EQUALITY?

“ In the arrangement of the contracted plans of  
 “ Reform, which have been attempted, there is  
 “ no leading principle,” says the Duke of Richmond, “ to determine that the addition ought to  
 “ be

" be 50, or 100, or 200; that the allotment shall  
 " be according to the population, property or  
 " taxes paid in each County; that any supposed  
 " proportion between the landed and trading in-  
 " terests is the just one; and that the division of  
 " County and City Members will correspond with  
 " this proportion when found. All is at sea,  
 " without any compass to enable us to distinguish  
 " the safe from the dangerous course: But in the  
 " more liberal and great plan of *Universal Repre-*  
 " *sentation* a clear and distinct principle at once ap-  
 " pears that cannot lead us wrong." I really  
 think the reverse is the fact and that the words of  
 the noble Duke are applicable to his own visionary  
 system. " All is at sea without any compass to  
 " enable us to distinguish the safe from the dan-  
 " gerous course." A principle of universality, like  
 that of equality is too general to be distinct and  
 clear, and therefore whatever leads us from that  
 clear and distinct principle of sound policy to the  
 universality of popular claims and an equality with  
 the thoughtless, the restless and tyrannic multitude  
 must lead us into the greatest confusion and into  
 the most dangerous errors of Government. " My  
 G system."

system," says the noble Duke, " does not contend  
 " for conveniency but for *right*; and if it is not a  
 " maxim of our Constitution that a British Subject  
 " is to be governed by Laws to which he has con-  
 " sented by himself or his Representative we should  
 " instantly abandon the error." The noble Au-  
 thor will permit me to shew his error by demon-  
 strating that the spirit of this maxim is adhered to  
 in our present State of Representation, and that his  
 Grace, though so good a constitutional writer, has  
 mistaken the maxim. The principles of the Con-  
 stitution, as established at the Revolution, are ge-  
 neral and impartial. They do not require that  
 British Subjects shall be governed only by laws to  
 which they have given consent personally or indi-  
 vidualy but collectively by the established system  
 of Representation, whose principle is universal,  
 making laws equal and not partial for the general  
 good. That every man should have an elective  
 franchise, or a Representative of his own choice is  
 by no means a maxim of our Constitution, which  
 has established universal, impartial and equal Re-  
 presentation, but not the universal right of election  
 which would give that equality to the thoughtless  
 multitude,



multitude, which is to be dreaded in all popular Governments as a political pestilence.

Equally subject to the operation of the Laws and to an equal participation of the blessings of the Constitution, is all that the people can expect from Legislation. Universality of suffrage would (by making the multitude feel the force of their equality and by a constant ferment) create the most dreadful disorders and destroy those blessings which it must be the wish of every wise man to enjoy for the peaceable possession of his Life, his Liberty and Property, all which great objects of society would be endangered by "universal suffrage and annual Parliaments," which the noble Duke is pleased to say "would, by their frequency and by their shortness, doubly operate in preventing corruption," but which I am persuaded would have a contrary effect and prove a remedy worse than the disorder, as an annual election would create a constant ferment to convulse the Nation and endanger the Constitution.

It is not so much an object of apprehension with

me that the principle of universality (like the exploded doctrine of equality in the Rights of Man) in allowing to every man an equal right to vote, tends to equality in other respects and to level property, as that it tends to anarchy and confusion, which by a constant ferment, may produce the calamity of that levelling principle which from the mischief it has occasioned in France, cannot be too soon opposed or too carefully avoided, as the foulest act of subverting the Constitution under the fairest pretence of preserving the purity of it's principles. "Men," says the noble Duke, "have  
 " equal rights to security from oppression and to  
 " the enjoyment of the great blessings of Life, Liberty and Property from their Constitution, and  
 " the protection of Property in particular is one  
 " of the most essential ends of Society." This equality of protection and enjoyment was never disputed, nor can the equal right to the one and equal participation of the other be better manifested than by a general Representation of the rights and interests of the Nation, and by equal Laws on the principles of our Constitution, to which all are subject alike without distinction.

Whatever

Whatever alteration may become necessary in our system of Representation, and whenever the time may arrive to make it, I am confident it will not be the plan suggested by the Duke of Richmond of universal right of suffrage, for the choice of Representatives founded upon the egregious error that "a vast quantity of the People are unrepresented and that it is a maxim of our Constitution that every man shall, either by himself or a Representative of his own choice, give his consent to the laws that bind him." The system is impracticable and the principle is mistaken. By adopting the present mode of Representation the People acknowledge the universality of Representation and give their consent to the Laws. They dispense with the universality of suffrage which they know is not a principle of the Constitution; they know it has wisely compressed the collective body of the People into a constituent power, and that elective part has delegated the national trust to a smaller number still, to represent the rights and interests of the whole in the democratic Assembly, or the People's share of the Legislature. The People are therefore fully, universally, equally and

and impartially represented, and as effectually as if every man had a vote or an elective franchise, and consequently they give consent to the Laws as positively as if every man had a suffrage for a Representative of his own choice. In America the People were not represented in our Parliament and therefore they could not be bound by Laws to which they did not either directly or indirectly give their consent. Ireland is in the same predicament, and having a Legislature of her own is not bound by an exclusive act in favor of the British-East-India-Company. But I maintain that the People of this Country by adopting a mode of Representation give their consent to the Laws and are consequently bound by them. This virtual Representation is general, equal and impartial, by giving to all, without distinction, the benefit of the Laws and the blessings of the Constitution. This fact refutes the assertion that “ a vast quantity of the community remain unrepresented and deprived of all share in the Legislation of their Country ;” and proves, more than volumes written on the subject of a Parliamentary Reform, that the grievance is not founded, and that the measure is not necessary,

either



either to the improvement of the Legislature or to the advantage of the Nation.

A contrary idea thrown out by Opposition and intended as a strong charge against the existing Parliament and Administration has no existence in truth. "If," say they, "the People are not *fully*, *adequately* and *equally* represented the evils this Country labour under will still remain and the oppression of the remaining unrepresented part of Society will be greater from a palliate measure." The Country labours under no evils but what are natural to great and wealthy Nations, and inseparable from the influx of wealth and the force of luxury: The national oppression is imaginary for the purposes of Party; for it is an absolute fact that the whole Nation is *fully*, *adequately* and *equally* represented, and therefore no part of the community can remain unrepresented though not all by members of their own choice, for that is impossible and found to be impracticable even by the new Government of America, where universal suffrage would be considered as a *Monstrum horrendum*. What indeed can be more dreadful than the idea of the whole mass of the People frequently

frequently collected to exercise the right of choosing every one a Representative of his own ! And if it be terrible in imagination how dreadful would be the existence of such a national calamity ! And how horrid the frequency of that public ferment by what men in Opposition to Government call “ a “ more frequent exercise of the People’s right of “ electing their Representatives.” A right that cannot exist without the repeal of the septennial act, nor then consistent with the public tranquillity and with the prerogative of the Crown to call and to dissolve Parliaments.

Great then must be the error of that system of universal suffrage, so much admired by the Duke of Richmond, which says “ let us determine upon “ the broad principle of *giving to every man his own* “ and we shall get rid of all difficulties.” Broad indeed is the principle and not unlike that of Paine ! Dangerous in the extreme would be a rash invitation to the People to struggle for their own upon the broad principle of equality and universal suffrage, without first ascertaining what is *every man’s own* that he may claim it constitutionally and  
be

be satisfied with it; without disturbing the general tranquillity and overthrowing by anarchy that Constitution we so much admire and which has happily established the present Government: I say happily because the advantages are innumerable and the blessings invaluable: The wisdom of the legislative and executive Powers has raised the prosperity and credit of the Nation, the dignity of the Crown, and the influence of Government beyond the example of any former period. Foreigners admire the happy and great effects of that wisdom while Natives who enjoy the blessings, are endeavouring to change and to overthrow the Legislature which, since the Revolution, has done wonders for the interest and dignity of the Nation in Europe and Asia; and by an influx of wealth and the unbounded confidence of all foreign Nations our public credit stands upon a Rock the admiration of all the World.

Upon these extraordinary principles of the noble Duke, were his visionary plan to be adopted, "all would be," to use his own expression, "at sea, without any compass to enable us to dis-

“tinguish the safe from the dangerous course.” And in this political darkness we should not be able to avoid the dreadful calamity which now convulses France.

When the noble Author says that “he agrees in opinion with those who are for *restoring* to all parts of the State their just rights,” the Public would have been able to form a judgement of that restoration had his Grace first pointed out in what those rights consist, and in what manner they have been violated. In speaking of the negative of the Crown the noble Duke says, with a democratic spirit, “*it appears to me preposterous that the will of one man should for ever obstruct every regulation which all the rest of the Nation may think necessary.*” A declaration of this sort seems to be quite as absurd and as dangerous to our Constitution as the doctrine of Paine. A limited Monarch cannot be considered individually as one Man but collectively as a Body politic, acting not capriciously and arbitrarily like absolute Monarchs but constitutionally with the advice of his Council as a component part of the Government as established by



by the Constitution and settled at the glorious Revolution. It is not possible for that "one man, the King, ever to obstruct every regulation which all the rest of the Nation may think necessary," because the collective Body have no regulations whatever to be obstructed, having delegated all popular regulations to the Representatives of the Nation. In absolute Governments it may be preposterous for the will of one man, placed on the high seat of despotism, to obstruct the liberty and happiness of the People; but in a free State, like this, a limited Monarch has no such authority or ambition, because he ever acts with the advice of his Privy Council and in unison with the determinations of the two Houses of Parliament.

To conclude: It has been said that the noble Duke's plan of "extending the right of voting to every Individual created much uneasiness in the minds of quiet and well disposed persons who are satisfied with the present system of Representation." And well it may; for I cannot conceive any thing more dangerous and alarming than

than such a plan of universal right or equality in the choice of Representatives, which the noble Duke calls giving *to every man his own*, or the just share of every Individual in the Government of the Nation, an alteration which his Grace thinks will be a great improvement, but which I am persuaded would destroy the fundamental principles and, by a system of confusion, subvert the Constitution.

But, were such a system of universality and equality practicable, without that greatest of all calamities a national ferment, what would be the consequence? Would it produce the happy effects which reformers affect to have at heart, viz. to restore and preserve the purity and vigor of the Constitution? I think not. It would, in my apprehension, have a contrary effect. A Parliamentary Reform, upon this broad principle, would be a victory of the third estate over the other two: But as it would be a victory of the Multitude over the rational part of the Nation so it would be a triumph at the expence of the Constitution and of the happiness of the People: For,

as Sir Robert Walpole has observed with greater ability and force of argument, the change would be truly alarming by giving the reins of Government to the People who, grown giddy, by too great a share in the Legislature would, Jehu-like, precipitate every measure of Legislation. It would destroy the wise equilibrium of the three component parts of the Legislature which is the beauty and security of our Constitution, and establish a Democracy as dangerous as that in France. It were indeed to be wished that every estate could preserve its purity and vigor to produce all the happy effects intended by the Constitution; but whenever circumstances render it absolutely impossible to preserve that equilibrium or constitutional share in the Government of this Nation then it is my opinion that the ascendancy of the Crown, which is supposed to be the case at present, is infinitely more supportable than the preponderance of Democracy: We regard the influence of the Crown with jealousy but we view that of Democracy with terror. The former power, even in the worst reigns, must have a check to prevent the danger of too great an influence; but nothing can check the

the

the rashness and folly of popular supremacy and infallibility which are the worst sort of despotism and oppression. Of this truth we need no other proof than the present calamitous situation of France. Hence it appears that the celebrated Letter of the Duke of Richmond, on the great subject of a Parliamentary Reform, has been misconceived by the noble Author and mistaken by the Advocates for a Reform, who have long been amusing the Public with a measure that is not necessary, and by means that are not constitutional.

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## A P P E N D I X.

**I**T was my intention to have confined myself to a refutation of the system of Parliamentary Reform, once so strongly recommended by the Duke of Richmond, and so warm'y espoused by some Reformers; but as the subject has since been brought before the House of Commons, it gives me an opportunity of taking a little notice of the great eloquence of the Speakers on both sides the question;



question; who, though disagreeing in every thing else, agree *una voce* in condemning, as visionary and impracticable, his Grace's favorite plan of personal or universal suffrage, that gives to every man, not disqualified by nature or law, the elective franchise, for the purpose of EQUALITY, which is the absurd and dangerous doctrine of the RIGHTS of MAN. The noble Duke's principle of giving equality to the multitude, as a leading principle of the Constitution, and Paine's principle of levelling mankind is in my apprehension a distinction without a difference: And perhaps the former, so warmly supported eleven years ago, gave birth to the latter.

That the state of Representation is, by the operation of time, through the influx of wealth and the force of luxury, rendered imperfect (as the noblest institutions *must* be from those great causes) and that there is a *constitutional remedy proportionate to the inconvenience*, cannot be doubted; but the difficulty is in agreeing about the means and the time of applying them: What may be extremely  
wise

wise and effectual in one manner may be the reverse in another: And what may be necessary and prudent at one period, may be big with danger at another. The adequate means of Reformation and the time to produce and apply them are certainly the great objects of public requisition and of parliamentary concession. The present is of all times the worst because all Europe is convulsed by the Revolutionary principles of France; and as this Nation has caught something of the infection there has been and still is a ferment in the minds of the multitude, which must totally subside before we can even think of reforming either supposed or real grievances in the state of Representation.

I have always thought that the subject, though of the greatest magnitude and importance, lies in a narrow compass, and I am the more convinced from the catalogue of grievances enumerated by the Honorable mover of the motion for a Parliamentary Reform, which I think might have been compressed into a few as the means of removing the rest. The rotten Boroughs; the interference  
of

of the Peers through them; and the influence they give to the Crown for the purposes of Executive Government, seem to be the substance of their supposed grievances, by creating an interest and an ascendancy in the two first estates of the Kingdom dangerous to the third or the People's share of Legislation. The ablest Statesmen and the best Friends to the People have entertained different opinions upon this subject, but the most extraordinary was that of the present Master General of the Ordnance. Universal suffrage and short Parliaments are means of Representation dreadful to think of, from the constant ferment and the inevitable calamity they would produce to defeat the virtue of the Nation and the wisdom of Representation: But a COMMUTATION is as practicable as it seems to be necessary to a more equal state of the elective franchise. That great Cities have a better right to suffrage and a happier tendency to the purity and vigor of Representation than what are called the rotten Boroughs cannot for a moment, be doubted. Remove the suffrage of the one to the other and we shall have a Representation not chosen by the interposition of the

Peers or the influence of the Crown. Every thing else, that virtue and wisdom can desire, will naturally and necessarily follow as the effects follow the cause. The utility of Representation does not depend on the number of Delegates but on the means of Election. A numerous assembly will probably be more tumultuous than deliberate; and we shall have more to dread from their passions than to expect from their wisdom. But although the great subject is reduceable to a narrow compass, and we see both the disorder and the remedy, it must nevertheless be confessed that it is an arduous task which requires a miracle to accomplish.

The Peers, it may be presumed, will never relinquish their interest nor Executive Government the influence of the Crown; and while these two estates of the Kingdom unite to interfere and to influence the choice of Representatives (as they must ever do from the nature of our Government and the genius of the People) a Parliamentary Reform will be impracticable, however constitutional



tional the principle may be and apparently necessary the measure.

I shall now say a few words on what has lately passed, upon that popular subject, in the House of Commons. The Honourable Mover, after enumerating the grievances, to shew the necessity of Reformation and the *right* of the People, has brought the strongest argument himself against the motion by declaring that “ should it be acceded  
“ to his system would tend to change our Govern-  
“ ment, that is, to overthrow our excellent Con-  
“ stitution.” This candid but singular declaration, from his own mouth, is the strongest condemnation of what he recommends: He says:  
“ These, Gentlemen, are the means which virtue  
“ inspires and wisdom should animate to *improve*  
“ our Government, but sacred truth requires me  
“ to acknowledge that if they are adopted they  
“ will occasion a total change to overthrow our  
“ Government !!!”

This system of overthrowing to improve Government is worse than that of the Charlatan, or

pretender to Physic, who is not so great a Marplot as to confess that his infallible nostrums will poison the People and destroy the Constitution of the Body natural. This confession of the Honourable Mover proves more against adopting his plan of Parliamentary Reform than all the eloquence of his Opponents, and shews as clear as any mathematical demonstration, the absolute necessity of resisting, at this time in particular, a measure which he has himself acknowledged to have a direct tendency to overthrow our Government and subvert our most excellent Constitution. I think the Speakers of the other Side should have fixed the Honourable Gentleman here, and have confined themselves to his own declaration, which proves more than volumes the danger of attempting a Reform of Parliament upon the grounds suggested and at the time proposed by Mr. Grey who has forcibly shewn the truth of a recent remark that "wise men sometimes say foolish things," or at least such as tend to defeat their own purposes.

Great Britain being deeply interested in the  
peace

peace and security of Europe she has more than a common interest, at this critical period, to check the restless and dangerous spirit of infatuation and emancipation which pervades France and may subvert the *best* as well as the *worst* Government, when it arises from spiritual or temporal fanaticism, that is, when it proceeds from mistaken notice of either religious or civil Liberty. Hence it was truly and indeed nobly observed that “ if, at any  
 “ time, the most liberal men were disposed to re-  
 “ move the restrictions of either Church or State,  
 “ the unparalleled spirit of the present period  
 “ would render it highly impolitic as being ex-  
 “ tremely dangerous to both our religious and  
 “ civil Establishments.”

This shrewd and seasonable remark of a great Statesman proves more than volumes written against *Innovations* and conveys so much instruction to the sound Politician as will, I hope, check a spirit of adventure and produce the happiest effects in Great Britain and Ireland to unmask false Patriots who, under the artful pretence of restoring the purity of the Constitution, insidiously  
 plunge

plunge a dagger in its bowels and inflame and convulse the Nation to perplex and overthrow the Government.

In this struggle between the established Legislature and a speculative system, Mr. Pitt contends, with the strongest evidence and with the concurrence of the best informed men and the true friends of the People, that the design of the Advocates for Reformation, which has excited so much attention and raised public expectation so high, is delusive, imposing upon the credulity of the Nation (now in a state of the greatest prosperity and highest public credit) the appearance instead of the reality of public virtue; the real object being universal Representation for the alarming purpose of Equality, a principle which is really a *monstrum horrendum* in Government.

On the other hand it is contended that the design is founded on the purest motives arising from the true principles of the Constitution, "to give  
 " to each of the three branches of the Legislature  
 " its due weight; convinced that this *equilibrium*  
 " or full share of the component parts is necessary  
 " to



“ to the very existence of the Constitution to  
 “ secure the Liberty and Property of a free  
 “ State.” But this declaration has more plausibility than truth; and shews the delusion which is so artfully imposed on the Public. Were their professions the true motives of their conduct would it be necessary to alter the Government and overthrow the Executive Power? Executive Government is the essence of Legislation and the very soul of the State: It is the whole virtue and wisdom of Government compressed into the narrow compass which the power of execution requires.

I never was in thirty years an Advocate for Ministers as men, but have ever been an Advocate for Executive Government, from a persuasion that it is both the interest and the duty of every subject to assist *ex animo* in the execution of whatever is judged by the Legislative Authority to be conducive to the general good. But notwithstanding this strong and unshaken attachment to the Executive Power of my Country which is as natural as it is necessary, I am a constitutional Writer, for that  
 man

man is the best friend to the Constitution who, strongly impelled by duty and interest, exerts himself to give weight to Legislative Wisdom and effect to Executive Government, for the former will ever be defeated in proportion to our neglect of or resistance to the latter; which resistance though one of the greatest privileges is often, from its abuse, one of the greatest evils of a free State.

Though always a friend to Executive Government (from my great duty to the Constitution, to the Legislature, and to the interest of my Country) I am ever a warm Advocate for Liberty, but there are two sorts of Liberty, viz. true Liberty founded on the reason of things; and notional Liberty founded on a *Chimera* or the abuse of rational Liberty: The abuse of Liberty is an *Ignis Fatuus*, the creature of Party for popular delusion; but true Liberty arises from the purest principles of public virtue, and being bounded by reason it teaches us not to expect perfection but to approach to it as near as the nature of things will admit, which is the present situation of our Legislature. Constitutions which the virtue of ages has inspired, and  
Institutions

Institutions which the pride of human wisdom has established, will in time discover imperfections, but those defects, in the present case, are like the spots we discover in the sun, or like the little blemishes of a great beauty. They tend more to shew the progress of commerce, and the influence of wealth and luxury than a radical defect in the fundamental principles of our Government.

That the *equilibrium* between the component parts of the Constitution is necessary to the purity of its principles there can be no doubt in the mind of any man; but in all mixed Governments it is absolutely impossible to keep the balance so equal as to prevent the influence of the one part or the ascendancy of the other. As our minds are as different as our complexions, so a variety of sentiments, of passions and interests will incline somewhat more to the one than to the other, to render that nice *equilibrium* of the component parts absolutely impracticable, and as unnecessary from the different opinions we entertain of what belongs to each and is conducive to the whole. But if we approach to that “ due weight of the three branches

“ of the Legislature” as much as the nature of a mixed Government and the influx of wealth will admit, I maintain the end of the Constitution is answered by approaching as near to perfection as possible. It should, therefore, be shewn by the advocates for Reform before “ they give to “ each of the three Estates of the Kingdom its true “ weight,” that they do not possess that weight. But this I have shewn is far from being the case, for we preserve the happy mixture (which is the beauty and soul of our Constitution) as much as the nature of things and the circumstances of the times will possibly admit: This is proved to a demonstration, by our enjoying at this period, more than at any other, all the prosperity, the happiness and security which the Constitution is capable of giving to this Nation.

By the prosperity and dignity of this Country it is manifest that the three Branches of the Legislature “ have their due weight,” and produce the desired effect, “ to check each other and to co-“ operate for the general good.” Was that not the case such happy consequences could not be produced



produced to preserve the liberty and property of the People, and with them the dignity of the Nation and the energy of Government with all the powers of Europe, beyond the example of any period in our history. An attempt, therefore, to alter a system that has produced so much property to the subject and so much weight to public credit cannot arise from the purest motives, founded on the true principles of the Constitution; but must (as Mr. Pitt observes) under the appearance of constitutional purity arise from motives inimical to the established Government, to introduce universal Representation for the purpose of equality to overthrow the Executive Power and subvert our happy Government. The extension of Commerce, the state of the Revenue and of Public Credit and the high rank this Nation holds among the powers of Europe, are together such strong evidence against the supposed evils and the proposed remedy, as to prove that the one only exists in the imagination, the other in the views of Party; and that an attempt to reform the Legislative Power is absolutely a design to overthrow the Executive Authority and alter the Constitution which is admitted

to be so excellent and allowed to have produced such happy consequences.

“ Stuard on the Duration of Parliaments,” says,  
 “ let the House of Commons seize this happy and  
 “ providential crisis to do, with popularity and  
 “ safety what, to save their country, must be done  
 “ at last. But instead of embracing this *favorable*  
 “ opportunity every means is employed by Go-  
 “ vernment to defeat the cause of Reform and  
 “ calumniate its Advocates. Good God! exclaims  
 “ this Author, how different, on the admission of  
 “ the objectors to the time was the present mo-  
 “ ment? The English ‘ starting back with horror  
 “ at the crimes and calamities of France and seem-  
 “ ingly forgetting all distresses in an enthusiasm  
 “ for their own Government! Surely common  
 “ sense pronounced that to be the hour for Refor-  
 “ mation.”

Can this writer be serious? If ever Reform was ill timed it was the period he speaks of. If “ the English *start back* with horror at the crimes and calamities of France,” should their astonishment  
 and

and horror induce them to subvert their own Constitution, the blessings of which they behold with enthusiasm? With such shocking example of national calamity does common sense and common prudence pronounce *this* to be the hour for Reformation to bring upon this Country the crimes and calamities of France? The Author must be delirious when he wishes "the House of Commons to  
 " seize this happy and providential crisis to do  
 " with popularity and safety what to save their  
 " Country must be done at last."

It is the greatest mockery of patriotism and the grossest insult offered to the understanding of an enlightened Nation to say that the present turbulent period, when this Country and all Europe are in a *ferment*, "is the happy and providential crisis" for innovation. It may be attempted with the applause of the headstrong and deluded multitude but not with true popularity or with safety. Nor can I admit "that it *must* be done at last to  
 " save our Country." The Country may be ruined by the attempt but can never be saved by  
 the

the principles and measures which have occasioned the crimes and calamities of France.

Another writer, still more eccentric, says " I  
 " may surely, without being too romantic, sup-  
 " pose that some part of the Administration will be  
 " clear sighted enough to see that the People *must*  
 " be *satisfied* in their just expectations and most  
 " surely *will be so*. Ministers will surely grant,  
 " with a good grace, what cannot much longer  
 " be with-held. They will at last (if not infatu-  
 " ated) catch the present fortunate opportunity,  
 " in the midst of our distresses, to make a cession  
 " of their rights to the People. They will not  
 " wait until the People have seized *by force* what  
 " they now urge with humble intreaty. I will  
 " venture to assert that Ministers have no time to  
 " lose. But" adds this writer, " the voice of  
 " the People in the present Reign has not been  
 " heard but once" (supposed to mean under  
 " Lord Rockingham) " within the walls of the House  
 " of Commons, *nor will it ever be heard there*  
 " *again.*"

Besides



Besides the indecency of the assertion and the falseness of the charge against the fidelity of the People's Representatives, the language he holds to Executive Government is equally injudicious and criminal, combining strong passions with great ignorance. The People are absolutely satisfied in their just expectations and will ever be so in the reign of so excellent a Sovereign and under Ministers who are found, by experience of their abilities, their principles and public spirit, to be the best qualified to promote the prosperity and dignity of the Nation at home and abroad.

If therefore Government has thought this period, in which there is a *ferment* in the minds of the People, the most improper for reforming the Parliament, and has used every legal and constitutional means, as the Guardian of our Lives, Liberty and Property, to oppose an unnecessary, impolitic and hazardous Reform, it is a proof of the greatest wisdom and public spirit, and for this act alone or preserving the blessings we enjoy under an excellent Government, Ministers deserve the admiration and confidence of the Nation.

Was

Was Reformation really necessary and the principle adequate, there would be no occasion to alter the Government or to overthrow the Executive Power. To cure defects it is not necessary to alter fundamental principles or long established forms of Government: For, if like Sampson, you in anger remove the Pillars the Constitution itself must fall, and equality and confusion, with all the horrors of anarchy, will be raised on the ruins of the happiest Government that has so long promoted good order for the preservation of Liberty and Property.

One of the principal reasons assigned for this dangerous alteration is, that it was a principle of the Constitution claimed at the Revolution, that a  
 “ man ought not to be governed by Laws in the  
 “ framing of which he had not a voice, either in  
 “ person, or by a Representative of his own  
 “ choice.” If this principle was claimed at the Revolution it must have been admitted in silence, for no declaration could be founded on such an absurdity; an absurdity which leads to Universal Representation, to establish that monstrous doctrine  
 the

the equality of the multitude, the former of which is as erroneous as the latter is dangerous. It never can be a principle of any Constitution whatever. The most republican Government cannot admit such a principle of equality, because it is hostile to all Government and subversive of all subordination and all security. In France it is a pretence to amuse the People but the principle can never be established. In America it has never been thought of, and were it to rise out of French Faticism the Americans would consider it as a monster and abhor it as a pestilence that levels all distinctions, banishes all order and destroys all security.

I have nevertheless shewn that our Legislature has adhered to the spirit of Universal Representation as much as the nature of our Government will admit. We have general and equal Representation, attending impartially to the general interests and to an equal participation of the blessings of the Constitution and the Laws without universal suffrage, which is the horrid doctrine of Equality or the Rights of Man, and therefore never to be ad-

mitted in the form of personal or universal Representation, or in any other shape whatever: For, however the Reformers may "have sanguine  
 " hopes that they shall be furnished with numerous  
 " and strong declarations and petitions from a great  
 " majority of the Kingdom, as the only means by  
 " which they expect or desire to succeed," the expectation is as delusive as the means are unconstitutional and hazardous. The People can never be induced to surrender their senses, or seduced to relinquish the security of all the blessings they enjoy, and which they derive from the excellence of our long established Government, for a new system, the effects of which would be as precarious as the attempt would be dangerous. "If," say they, "the Country will unite with us in demanding a Reform of Parliament, we have no doubt  
 " of it's being obtained in a *regular way* and without any hazard whatever." But unluckily this invitation to the People to rise is the most irregular way and the most hazardous attempt at a Reform; because a demand of the collective Body or great mass of the People, upon the French system, is as unconstitutional as it is alarming, tending to level



level all distinctions, to destroy all order and subordination, to overthrow the Government and subvert the Constitution under an artful pretence of restoring the purity of it's principles. Were the aggregate Body to forget the rights of the constituent Body (God forbid they should ever give such a mortal stab to the Constitution) and were the people, thus cajoled by the tricks of party jugglers, to unite in the demand nothing can so effectually endanger our Peace, Liberty and Property, which are now fully enjoyed and happily secured, under the strangest and most visionary design of rendering them more secure by a Parliamentary Reform.

A young and eloquent speaker, who would have made a great figure at the bar, and who will rival Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, has thrown out a hint which for its singularity and importance deserves to be particularly noticed. This youthful but elegant and persuasive orator (who, to the sweetness and profusion of Tully will, in time, join the nerves, attic salt and rapid eloquence of Demosthenes) has contended for a third class of electors,

the landed, the commercial and the *professional*: But I think the observation is more ingenious than found. I hope there never will be more than the two former interests to contend for Representation. The professional is a jesuitical distinction, the admission of which would be dangerous to the Constitution. Although I am partial to this promising Statesman, I really think that the reason he assigns for that class of suffrages is the strongest that can be urged against it.

Without classing the *principles* of our brave Compatriots, the Sons of Neptune and of Mars, who have so much professional merit and so great a claim to the public respect for their services, with those of the bar (which so unhappily confound the spirit of the Constitution with the chicane of Law) it should be remembered that professional men of the navy and army are servants of the Crown and creatures of Executive Government; and consequently are under undue influence, which would increase the ascendancy already complained of in the state of Representation. It is, in my apprehension, a false and dangerous idea that this

third

third or professional interest will serve as a check on the landed and commercial interests to preserve the equilibrium: For, instead of operating as a check on them, it will throw a considerable weight into the scale of the Crown, and as they come into Parliament through the rotten Boroughs and the interest of the Peers or the influence of Executive Government, for the purposes of their political creators, so the professional interest is the very cause of the grievance complained of in the present state of Representation, for professional men may be considered as placemen, having no will of their own. The reasons therefore for supporting their suffrages, as a distinct class, are the strongest to refute their claim and to shew the impolicy and danger of admitting it,

Nothing is wanting to check the weight of the commercial interest as our young but intelligent and animated orator supposes, which can never, in my apprehension, preponderate when placed in the scale with the landed interest: Notwithstanding the influx of wealth the landed interest, which is rendered the more valuable, must ever have an ascendancy

ascendency in the general state of Representation, whatever may be the force of particular instances to the contrary; especially when it is considered that the commercial not only gives weight to the landed, by its improved state, but also, as rivers flow into the sea, *files off* to the landed interest.

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## C O N C L U S I O N.

I HAVE observed that a party in opposition to Administration (and a party in a free State can never die but with the Constitution) have long been amusing a generous but sometimes too credulous a Nation (for credulity in this Country oftener arises from goodness abused than from weakness) with a measure that at present is not necessary and by means that are not constitutional. I have since admitted that there are constitutional means of redressing real grievances and "a Time for all things under the Sun." Although perfection is not the lot of man it is the nature of man to remove imperfections. Jarring interests like con-  
tending



tending elements may oppose the design, but whatever virtue suggests and wisdom animates must, like the force of truth, at last prevail. To accomplish this end, in the present case opinions as opposite as the poles are maintained: The Duke of Richmond condemns palliative plans of Parliamentary Reform, as measures of imbecility and inefficacy, and contends for the strong measure of a radical Reform. This seems to be the doctrine of the present Reformers: For, although they condemn the noble Duke's system and Mr. Fox declares he shall ever oppose it with all the weight of his interest, it differs in nothing with their own in principle and tendency whatever it may do in form: The end is the same though the means may be different. I maintain a contrary opinion: I contend that whenever the proper time arrives for a Reform, palliatives will lessen and gradually remove the complaint: Then the disorder will cure itself. But a radical Reform is a strong measure both unnecessary and dangerous. Like rash amputation, which occasions a mortification, radical Reform would convulse the Nation and subvert the Constitution. The wish of moderate men is

to restore its purity by gradual and safe means calculated to repair the defects without endangering the edifice: But the design of rash men is to precipitate the Nation into the greatest error, and to make the colour of virtue a pretence to overthrow the Constitution. The noble Author, now high in office, is certainly not of the latter class, but his strong measure of EQUALITY, however well intended, would supply the means of producing that dreadful calamity.

So much I have thought it necessary to say in answer to the much talked of Letter of the celebrated Duke of Richmond on a Parliamentary Reform, to destroy the strong but delusive impression of doctrines founded on such high authority: I shall now trouble the Public with the dispassionate thoughts of a disinterested individual who professes himself a constitutional Writer, neither the instrument of power or the tool of party, but equally zealous for the dignity and energy of the constitutional authorities of the State, and for the constitutional rights and true interest of the People, and who is therefore under the influence of truth alone.

A TREATISE

## A T R E A T I S E

ON THE POPULAR SUBJECT OF

## A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

THE subject of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, for the purpose of repealing the Septennial Act, and establishing *short* Parliaments, (which the OPPOSITION call “a more frequent exercise of the People’s right of electing their Representatives, to restore the *freedom* of election, and a more *equal* Representation”) is become, from the designs of Party and the credulity of their adherents, of so much consequence to our excellent Constitution, and to the happy form of Government it has established by a *limited* monarchy, (the very reverse of absolute and arbitrary power) which wisely combines the monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical interests of a free Nation, enjoying rational liberty, not founded on the *chimera of equality*, which is as impracticable as it is incompatible with the beautiful order of society, called subordination, the very soul of civilization—I say, a subject of such

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magnitude

magnitude and consequence to the very existence of the Constitution, to the being of the Government, and to the prosperity of the Nation, is of so much national importance, and it so much concerns every man, at this extraordinary period of political Quixotism and emancipation from the authorities of a well-regulated State, (which are as necessary to the body politic, as nourishment is to the body natural) that I feel a strong impulse, as an Englishman, to deliver the opinion of an honest man upon a subject that so much engages the attention of the Nation.

I have therefore the honor to address a few words to my fellow-citizens on the present passion of the Nation for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM; or rather upon the present *fever of party* to bring about an innovation which, in the most peaceable times, is dangerous to the Constitution, and which, at this period of popular phrenzy, would probably subvert it, and introduce that wild and extravagant system of EQUALITY which destroys every bond of society, and brings civilization back to a state of nature, with all the horrors



horrors of anarchy and confusion which a well-judged subordination is calculated to prevent for the peace and security of mankind, who are born (in a state of civilization) to be governed by the laws of God and man: or, in other words, by the established authorities of Church and State.

As I have not the honor to be personally known to his Majesty's Ministers, I shall, at least, have the merit of sincerity, and the Public, ever candid and liberal, will give me credit for being influenced by truth and justice alone, divested entirely of the motives of the political pander, and by consequence, without the venal adulation of the time-serving sycophant, who has a view to his own interest more than to the cause of sacred truth and the welfare of his country.

A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM seems to be in every body's mouth, but, I believe, not within every body's capacity. The present passion of the people for reform, manifestly arises more from the temper than the virtue of the times, and, consequently more from the ebullition of political

fanaticism, than from the conviction of the public mind that it is right and necessary to the public good. Like empiricism, it is the grossest imposition on the understanding, the greatest possible delusion, tending, like the infallible remedies of the physical impostor, to cure disorders which exist only in a distempered imagination. This political fever, at the close of the eighteenth century, requires the skill of the able physician to abate its ebullition and *delirium*, and not the poisonous nostrums of the empiric to enflame and render the disorder more dangerous.

In a wish for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM we do not hear the voice of the People, (the *Vox Populi* so much admired in free States) but the clamor of Faction (so justly dreaded in all States) and the efforts of Party to disturb the public peace for the purposes of men out of power, and not, as is artfully pretended, for the true interest of the Nation. It arises more from the designs of factious men, who are restless under all governments, and enemies to all subordination,

tion, than from the conviction of dispassionate men of the necessity of the measure.

I will ever admit, that much attention is due to the voice of the People; but then we should distinguish between the voice of the People and the voice of Faction; raised for the designs of Party. As we should love the People and respect their interests, so we should distrust and repel the Factious, who, like all desperate adventurers, hang out false colours, and having nothing to lose themselves, are clamorous to misguide the People, and abuse the Government under which they live, that they may share the mischief occasioned by anarchy and confusion: these factious and restless spirits in a good Government are like incendiaries, who rejoice in the calamity of a conflagration they have occasioned, because they are enriched by the plunder.

Much has been said, but, I believe, little understood by the Public at large, concerning "the necessity of *short* Parliaments, for the purpose of having frequent recourse to the elective Body  
" for

"for the sense of the People." As this seems to be the principal object of the advocates for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, it cannot, I think, be better refuted than by the valuable and unanswerable speech of Sir Robert Walpole, at a period when a clamorous faction made just the same noise under his administration as they do at present upon that subject.

Sir Robert has very fairly and ably stated the case, and shewn, to the conviction of every candid mind, the wide difference between the effects of septennial and triennial Parliaments; proving clearly the former to be the best calculated for the salutary purposes of a wise and efficient Government; and that the latter has a contrary tendency, being big with the greatest possible danger to the dignity and interest of this Nation, by introducing a system of confusion that would subvert our Constitution, so justly admired by the ablest statesmen of all Nations, for having given us the happiest form of Government.

Sir Robert truly observes, that "the nature of  
" our



“ our Constitution seems to be mistaken by the  
 “ advocates for a Parliamentary Reform.” *Short*  
 Parliaments, or a frequent appeal to the people, is  
 incompatible with the dignity of Government and  
 with the interest of the People governed ; because  
 it tends to perplex Executive Government, and to  
 defeat the salutary purposes of the Public. Too  
 frequent an appeal to the constituent Body con-  
 vulses the Nation ; it inflames the factious and se-  
 ditious, and is subversive of the authorities of the  
 State, on which the public security is founded ;  
 that disorder is ruinous to the liberty and property  
 of the People, which can only be secured by con-  
 stitutional authority and necessary subordination.

The true sense, like the true interest of the  
 People, is what every good Government will se-  
 riously attend to, as the soundest policy ; but the  
*sovereignty* of the People is a libel on every Go-  
 vernment, because it is repugnant to all Govern-  
 ment, and to the policy of every State ; which,  
 good or bad as the Government may be, has ever  
 had, and necessarily must ever have a supremacy,  
 or a controuling sovereign power. There never  
 was,

was, nor can ever be, such an existence in any country as a sovereign People, which is a perfect solecism in politics. The People are the *subjects* of every State to which they belong, and the description of sovereign subjects is an absurdity in terms.

Indeed adventurers, such as the restless, the factious and seditious, who amuse the People, to betray them, may style the People the Sovereign Power; but, even such pests of society know that the sovereignty is not in the multitude, but in the constitutional authority that governs and controuls them for the prosperity and security of the community at large.

The supremacy is, beyond a doubt, in the Government of all countries, and not in the People governed. It is quite as absurd to say, the sovereignty of the People at large, as the sovereignty of the aristocracy or the democracy. It is impossible there can exist a sovereignty in the People, or a state of Equality. Even in France, at this period of delusion and political fanaticism, the sovereignty is not in the People, for that is absolutely

absolutely impossible, but in their Representatives, who have usurped the sovereignty and controul of the People; and a contracted sovereignty, or the sovereign subjects of a State is, as I have observed, an absurdity in terms, a solecism in politics, a *monstrum horrendum*.

Were the English, after the example of the French, to talk of the *sovereignty of the People*, they would talk like madmen. The sovereign authority is vested by the Constitution not in the People at large, but in a limited monarchy, consisting of three estates or component parts of constitutional Government, which makes a happy mixture of powers that have enacted the mildest laws, and established the wisest subordination.

This is the Majesty of the State and the sovereignty of the British Constitution, which is manifestly not vested in the Public, but in the happiest system of Government, for the prosperity and security of the People, blessed with such a well-poised Constitution as that we boast of and all Europe admire.

That "all power is derived from the People, and "should revert to the People," is a doctrine as dangerous in its application, as it is delusive in its principle. Society was certainly formed by the concurrence of the People for the general happiness and security; and hence, all authority was, in that sense, derived from the People for the purposes of the People. But still the bonds of Society and of Government, which were made for the good and security of the whole, are sacred, and not to be dissolved capriciously, or wantonly to endanger the general happiness; but only when there is an absolute necessity from the abuse of the established authorities, and the perversion of public justice.

For instance: Were the constitutional powers of the King, Lords, and Commons so perverted (as they have been under the Stuarts) as to endanger the liberty of the Nation which established that form of Government, then there would be an absolute necessity of resistance to that abuse which would *again* justify a revolution: But when, as at the present glorious period of national prosperity and distinguished rank among the powers of Europe,



rope, our most excellent Constitution is happily preserved, and there is as just an *equilibrium* of authority as the nature of things will admit in the monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical parts of government to promote the dignity of the Nation, and the true interest of the People, then an attempt to reform such a *limited* Monarchy and well-poised Government, would be an attempt to make the Nation *'felo de se*, and to sign the *death warrant* of that prosperity and security we enjoy from our excellent Constitution, which would be subverted in the mildest reign, and at the most glorious period of our history.

I do therefore perfectly agree with that able minister, Sir Robert Walpole, that those men who are advocates for *short* Parliaments, (or "a more frequent exercise of the right of Election") by a Parliamentary Reform, either mistake the nature of our Constitution or are the greatest enemies to our Government, that is, to our happy establishment in Church and State.

Sir Robert, like an able politician, well ac-

acquainted with the principles and effects of our Constitution, observes, that "the beauty and perfection of it consist in the happy *mixture* of our "Government," or the component parts of the Constitution, which together create the sovereignty of the Nation, but not the sovereignty of the People, for there cannot be any such popular sovereignty, since a supremacy, or controul over them, must be lodged some where. That happy mixture of the powers of King, Lords and Commons is the very soul of our Constitution; as the political Trinity, or the co-operation of the three estates of the kingdom, wisely prevents the absolute power of monarchy, the ambitious power of aristocracy and the tyrannical power of democracy. In the happy union of the three, their wisdom and spirit are secured, and their separate defects are avoided. It is difficult to say which of the three separately would be the worst sort of Government. If absolute monarchy becomes arbitrary and oppressive, democratical government becomes tyrannical: The one may do great mischief by abusing constitutional authority, the other more mischief by confounding all distinctions, and subverting

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ing all authority. If, therefore, absolute monarchy (which is often rendered arbitrary by the pride of aristocracy) is degrading to civilized states, the more absolute sovereignty of the People, who are influenced by their passions, is perhaps more degrading to civilization, and the more ruinous system; for, as anarchy and confusion are the greatest tyranny, so they are the greatest calamity.

Sir Robert has said nothing of the tyranny and fatality of such a system of confusion and *equality*, but he has ably shewn the calamity of democratical government, which he truly says is as inconstant as the wind, and never steady long enough to promote any good purpose; whilst its want of stability and efficacy defeats the wisest measures, and gives birth to the most unhappy consequences. And, with great truth and ability, he concludes, that as we value our incomparable Constitution, and regard our happiness as a free People, *engaged in commerce which requires peace and security*, we should guard against the danger of running too much into that sort of Government which is commonly called popular or democratical, which, by giving more than  
a con-

a constitutional power to the People, destroys the happy *equilibrium* of our Constitution, and defeats the wisest purposes of a limited monarchy and a well-poised Government; a misfortune which septennial Parliaments have prevented, and which triennial or short Parliaments (now so weakly contended for) would bring about, by too frequent an appeal to the People; a measure that would convulse the Nation, unhinge Government, and subvert the Constitution, which is an event that we cannot too much dread, or too carefully avoid.

Hence it is evident, that the violence and oppression of absolute Governments did not alarm Sir Robert Walpole so much as the impolicy and danger of giving to the People too great a share in the Government which he thinks they will abuse and subvert: In such popular Governments men are restless, factious and seditious, and often desperate, corrupting the minds of the credulous part of the People to raise discontents, seditions and insurrections. This able minister, therefore, truly said, that *short* Parliaments, either annual or triennial, would produce that misfortune by too frequent



quent an appeal to the People, which would throw such a weight of influence into the scale of democracy as would destroy the happy mixture of authority, which Sir Robert observed was the beauty and perfection of our Constitution, and the very soul of our Government, for a democratical Government would soon become the most absolute, and perhaps the most tyrannical Government.

But Sir Robert has so ably treated this subject, and so clearly shewn the folly of a Parliamentary Reform, so far as it relates to *short* Parliaments, (under the delusive idea of a more *frequent* exercise of the People's right of electing their Representatives, to secure the *freedom* of Election and a more *equal* Representation,) and the fatality of adopting the measure, that I beg leave to refer the Public to his celebrated Speech, which proves unanswerably that no REFORM is necessary, and that a wise and *firm* Government, (regardless of the clamour of the factious, and the contagion of the seditious) will, at this period, as under his administration, support the Constitution and enforce the Law.

**THE SPEECH**  
OF THE CELEBRATED  
**SIR ROBERT WALPOLE,**  
AGAINST SHORT PARLIAMENTS,  
TO SHEW THAT  
**A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM**  
IS BOTH UNNECESSARY AND DANGEROUS.

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"MR. SPEAKER,  
"ALTHOUGH the question for *A Repeal of the Septennial Act*, (for the purpose of "a more frequent exercise of the right of Election,") has been already so ably opposed and so fully answered, that there is no great occasion to say any thing farther against it, yet I hope the House will indulge me with the liberty of giving some of those reasons which induce me to be against the motion.

"In general I must take notice, that the nature of our Constitution seems to be very much mistaken by the gentlemen who are advocates for *short* Parliaments. It is certain, that ours is a mixed Government, and the perfection of our Constitution

tion consists in this, that the monarchical, aristocratical and democratical forms of Government are mixed and interwoven in ours so as to give us all the advantages of each, without subjecting us to the danger and inconveniences of either. The democratic forms of Government, which is the only one I have now occasion to take notice of, are liable to these inconveniences;—that they are generally too tedious in their coming to any resolution, and seldom brisk and expeditious enough in carrying their resolutions into execution; that they are always wavering in their resolutions, and never steady in any measures they resolve to pursue; and that they are often involved in factions, seditions, and insurrections, which expose them to be made the tool, if not *the prey of their neighbours*: Therefore, in all the regulations we make with respect to our Constitution, we are to guard against running too much into that form of Government which is properly called democratical: This was, in my opinion, the unhappy effect of the Triennial Act, and that will again be the unhappy effect should that impolitic measure ever be restored, by what the MINORITY call “a more frequent exercise

“ of the People’s right of choosing their Representatives.”

“ That *triennial* elections would make our Government too tedious in all their resolves is evident; because, in such cases, no prudent administration would ever resolve upon any measure of consequence ’till they had felt not only the pulse of the Parliament but the pulse of the People; and the Ministers of State would always labour under this disadvantage, that as secrets of State must not be immediately divulged, their enemies (and enemies they will always have) would have a handle for exposing their measures, and rendering them disagreeable to the People, and thereby carrying, perhaps, a new election against them before they could have an opportunity of justifying their measures, by divulging those facts and circumstances from whence the justice and wisdom of their conduct would clearly appear.

“ Then, Sir, it is by experience well known, that what is called the *populace* of every country, are apt to be too much elated with success, and



too much dejected with every misfortune; this makes them wavering in their opinions about affairs of State, and never long of the same mind; and as this House is chosen by the free and unbiassed voice of the People in general, *if this choice were so often renewed*, we might expect that this House would be as wavering and as unsteady as the People usually are; and it being impossible to carry on the public business without the concurrence of this House, the Ministers would always be obliged to change their measures as often as the People change their minds.

“ These effects, perplexing and hazardous to the Ministry, and dangerous to the public interest and security, would be the unhappy and inevitable consequence of *short* Parliaments, commonly called by OPPOSITION “ a more *frequent* exercise of “ the People’s right of electing their Representatives.” With septennial Parliaments, Sir, we are not exposed to either of these misfortunes; because, if Ministers, after having felt the pulse of the Parliament, which they can always soon do, resolve upon any measures, they generally have time

enough before the new elections come on, to give the People a proper information, in order to shew them the justice and the wisdom of the measures they have pursued; and if the People should, at any time, be too much elated or too much dejected, or should, without any cause, change their minds, those at the helm of affairs have time to set them right before a new election comes on.

“ As to faction and sedition, Sir, I will grant that in monarchical and aristocratical Governments, it generally arises from violence and oppression; but in democratical Governments, it always arises from the People having too great a share in the authority of Government. For in all Countries and in all Governments, there always will be many factious and unquiet spirits, but more particularly in free States, who can never be at rest either in power or out of power; when in power, they are never easy unless every man submits intirely to their direction; and when out of power, they are always working and intriguing against those that are in, without any regard to justice, or to the interest of their country.

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“ In popular Governments, like our own, such men have too much game, they have too many opportunities for working upon and corrupting the minds of the People, in order to give them a bad impression of, and to raise discontents against those that have the management of the public affairs for the time; and these discontents often break out into seditions and insurrections. This, Sir, would, in my opinion, be our misfortune, if our Parliaments were either annual or triennial: By such frequent elections, there would be so much power thrown into the hands of the People, as would destroy that *equal mixture*, or nice equilibrium of authority, which is the beauty of our excellent Constitution: In short, our Government would become a democratical Government, and from thence might very probably diverge into a tyrannical. In order, therefore, to preserve our Constitution, in order to prevent our falling under tyranny and arbitrary power, we ought to preserve that Law which I really think has brought our Constitution to a more equal mixture, and, consequently, to a greater perfection than it was ever in before the septennial law took place.

“ As

“ As to bribery and corruption, Sir, if it were possible to influence, by such base means, the majority of the electors of Great Britain, to chuse such men as would probably give up their liberties; if it were possible to influence, by such means, a majority of the Members of this House to consent to the establishment of arbitrary power, I would readily allow, that the calculations made by the gentlemen of the other side were just, and their inference true; but I am persuaded that neither of these is possible. As the Members of this House generally are, and must always be gentlemen of fortune and figure in their county; is it possible to suppose, that any of them could, by a pension or a post, be influenced to consent to the overthrow of our Constitution; by which the enjoyment, not only of what he got, but of what he before had, would be rendered altogether precarious? I will allow, Sir, that with respect to bribery, the price must be higher or lower, generally in proportion to the virtue of the man who is to be bribed; but it must likewise be granted, that the humour he happens to be in at the time, the spirit he happens to be endowed with, adds a great deal



deal to his virtue. When no encroachments are made upon the Rights of the People, when the People do not think themselves in any danger, there may be many of the electors, who by a bribe of ten guineas, might be induced to vote for one candidate more than another; but if the Court were making any encroachments upon the Rights of the People, a proper spirit would no doubt arise in the Nation; and in such a case, I am persuaded that none, or very few, even of such electors could be induced to vote for a Court Candidate; no, not for ten times the sum.

“ There may, Sir, be some bribery and corruption in the Nation; I am afraid there will always be some: But it is no proof of it, that strangers are sometimes chosen; for a gentleman may have so much natural influence over a borough in his neighbourhood, as to be able to prevail with them to chuse any person he pleases to recommend; and if upon such recommendation they choose one or two of his friends, who are perhaps strangers to them, it is not from thence to be inferred, that  
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the two strangers were chosen their representatives by the means of bribery and corruption.

“ To insinuate, Sir, that money may be issued from the public treasury for bribing elections, is really something very extraordinary, especially in those gentlemen who know how many checks are upon every shilling that can be issued from thence; and how regular the money granted in one year for the public service of the Nation, must always be accounted for the very next session in this House, and likewise in the other, if they have a mind for any such account. As to the gentlemen in offices, if they have any advantage over country gentlemen, in having something else to depend on besides their own private fortunes, they have likewise many disadvantages: they are obliged to live here in London, with their families, by which they are put to a much greater expence than gentlemen of equal fortunes who live in the country: this lays them under a very great disadvantage with respect to supporting their interest in the country. The country gentleman, by living among the electors, and purchasing the necessaries for his family from them,

them, keeps up an acquaintance and correspondence with them, without putting himself to any extraordinary charge; whereas, a gentleman who lives in London, has no other way of keeping up an acquaintance or correspondence among his friends in the country, but by going down once or twice a year at a very extraordinary charge, and often without any other business: So that we may conclude, a gentleman in office cannot, even in seven years, save much for distributing in ready money at the time of an election; and I really believe, if the fact were narrowly inquired into, it would appear, that the gentlemen in office are as little guilty of bribing their electors with ready money, as any other set of gentlemen in the kingdom.

“ That *there are ferment*s often raised among the People without any just cause, is what I am surpris’d to hear controverted, since very late experience may convince us of the contrary. Do not we know what a ferment was raised in the nation, towards the latter end of the late queen’s reign? And it is well known what a *fatal change* in the affairs of

this nation was introduced, or at least confirmed, by an election's coming on while the nation was in that ferment. Do we not know what a ferment was raised in the nation soon after his late Majesty's accession? And if an election had been allowed to come on, while the nation was in that ferment, it might perhaps have had as fatal effects as the former; but, thank God, this was wisely provided for by the very septennial law which is now wanted to be repealed! And, as such *ferments* may hereafter often happen, I must think that frequent elections will always be dangerous; for which reason, as far as I can see at present, I believe, I shall at all times think it *a very dangerous experiment to repeal the Septennial Act.*"

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## C O M M E N T.

THESE were the masterly sentiments of that able statesman, Sir ROBERT WALPOLE, upon the subject of *short* Parliaments (the principal object of a Parliamentary Reform) and which the Associators call "a more *frequent* exercise of the People's "right of choosing Representatives, for the free-  
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“ *dom* of Election, and a more *equal* Representation.” This was his well judged and spirited conduct at a period that was less distinguished than the present, for national dignity and public prosperity; and more disturbed by the restless and factious spirits that are always troublesome in a free or popular Government, because licentiousness borders on liberty, and seems to be inseparable from it.

At the present period, distinguished above all others for public prosperity at home, and the vast influence of our Government abroad, a period in which there is *no just cause of a ferment*, this admirable speech refutes the opinion, and I trust will overthrow the designs of false patriots, who, with the mask of public virtue, are clamorous for *short* Parliaments, in order to have frequent recourse to the elective body for the sense of the People, which is a measure of the greatest delusion, for Sir Robert has shewn to a demonstration, that it would produce the most ruinous consequences, and defeat the very purposes the People wish to promote.

By such an impolitic and hazardous measure, arising from a Parliamentary Reform, the Legislature would be unsettled; Executive Government unhinged; the Public in a continual ferment; the funds as unsteady as the wind; all confidence in Government (the soul of the State and of Commerce) would be destroyed, and the dignity and prosperity of the Nation subverted.

These would be the fatal effects of the single measure for triennial or short Parliaments, the mischief of which is so little understood by the People at large, that they are easily imposed upon by the restless and factious part of the Nation, who, like public incendiaries, thrive by the calamity of public confusion. Hence that just observation of Sir Robert Walpole, "in popular Governments *ferments* are often arising among the People without any just cause."\* The fatal change

\* "There is no law of nature, the preservation of which is of so much importance to the universal community of mankind; there is none which ought, therefore, to be guarded with such jealous cares, to be held so sacred and inviolable as the established system of Government in every civil society. What source has been productive of so much calamity to the human race? What cause has so often desolated whole countries, and drenched the earth with blood? Daring and desperately

change in our affairs which such a ferment had occasioned, and the fear of another equally fatal to this country, made Sir Robert resist it, as became an able guardian of the public peace, prosperity, and security.

In that arduous task, a *firm* and spirited administration

perately wicked indeed as the men must be who can engage in schemes to subvert the civil Government of the country in which they live; yet could they foresee, or did they allow themselves to consider, the extended, the accumulated scene of human misery through which they must wade to the attainment of their ends, it would, we might presume, check even the most desperate, and the most daringly wicked would shrink with horror from their purpose. At least we may safely affirm, that were these dreadful consequences seen and considered by those who are blindly drawn into their schemes, and who are always the dupes, and too often the victims of their insidious designs, every good citizen, every man of property, every man of common understanding would shrink with horror from such parricides; and they would soon find the due reward of their actions, especially were it considered, that in almost every attempt to subvert or change the Government of any State, not only have the immediate consequences been dreadful, but, in general, the issue has proved entirely ineffectual to the end proposed, or, at least pretended, and the attempt fatal to the society itself. So that, however artful and designing men may find their account in public disorder, in attempts to subvert the Government of their Country, from hopes of raising themselves on its ruins; the body of the People have always had too much reason to repent, and long regret so desperate an undertaking. And that not only when, as is generally the case, artful men, devoid of principle, and desperate in their fortunes, have, under the specious pretence of removing grievances and rectifying abuses, attempted to embroil and subvert the Government."

*Importance of supporting the established Government, p. 14, 15.*

nistration succeeded; by convincing the Public of the folly and fatality of such a ferment, which, whilst it convulsed the Nation, and shook public credit, by affecting the funds, it endangered all the good purposes of the People. The Public were convinced by an appeal to their reason, and not to their passions; the ferment ceased; tranquillity was restored; the funds regained their credit; and confidence in Executive Government (the soul of public credit and of national prosperity) returned. Thus the Constitution was happily preserved, and the restless and seditious sons of Faction were totally disappointed by the constitutional and resolute conduct of Executive Government!

The same will happen on the present occasion, under an administration who have the confidence of the Public, if his Majesty's Ministers have courage (as there is every reason to believe from the ruling principle of their conduct, and the well-timed measures hitherto pursued) to act from the same public spirit and unshaken *resolution* to preserve the Constitution with the dignity and energy of Government, for the true interest of a free, enlightened,



lightened, and spirited Nation, who are too just to be the promoters of a ferment *without any cause*, and too brave to be the dupes of a restless and seditious faction.

The fatal change which has been occasioned in this country, and is always to be dreaded by a *ferment*, is the strongest possible reason for the strong arm of Government to prevent ferments by the most spirited constitutional exertions. It is the first and greatest duty that Executive Government owes to the security of the People. Short Parliaments, which are calculated to keep the multitude in a continual ferment, are to be dreaded as a political pestilence.\* All innovations

\* " In all moderate Governments, like our own, there are better and surer methods of redress than force and violence. A cool, firm, and rational opposition to abuses, steadily and prudently persisted in, will scarce ever fail of success, especially in a Government so popular as that under which we live: almost the only thing that can frustrate and disappoint the success of such measures, is want of patience, and, without waiting a *proper time*, precipitating opposition into riot and violence; for then every man of character and principle, who before might desire and endeavour to obtain a redress of abuses, will, in this case, think it necessary to strengthen the hands of Government; as well knowing, that the worst abuses of Government must be preferable to such means of reform, or any redress that can be obtained by such means. For instance; what improvement or advantages did the British Government  
derive

in Church and State are hazardous; and, if ever a Parliamentary Reform is necessary, it is not when the Nation is in a ferment, to hazard a change of Government fatal to the Constitution, and to the true interest of the People governed.

Were there no other reasons the present restless spirit of faction and sedition, (by which the enemies of our excellent Constitution are endeavouring to subvert it) renders this period the most improper for a Parliamentary Reform; and therefore such a Reform is absolutely impracticable in the present ferment raised by faction, without any just cause, and at a period the most glorious of our history: a period eminently distinguished for public prosperity and national dignity: a period highly flattering, in which Great-Britain holds the first rank among the Powers of Europe.

#### Innovations,

derive from the issue of a civil war that raged in and laid waste this country for near twenty years in the last century? Were not the People glad to resume their former Government, if with some appearance of reform in the Constitution, with still greater abuses in the administration than ever? On the other hand, what important advantages, what a happy change was effected by a calm, but firm and spirited proceeding at the glorious Revolution in the same century, almost without a sword being drawn, or a drop of blood being shed." *Importance of preserving the established System of Government*, p. 15, 16.

Innovations, which are always dangerous, may be attended to under the mild and persuasive influence of reason and public tranquillity ; but not by the compulsion of the factious and seditious part of the Nation, who disturb the peace of the public under false pretences of public virtue. His Majesty's Ministers (who deservedly possess the confidence of the Nation from their general principles, and their judicious measures in Europe and Asia) would therefore be TRAITORS to the Constitution and to the security of the Public, were they, as guardians of the public peace and prosperity, to encourage a ferment by pusillanimously yielding to the spirit of sedition, and the clamour of faction.

From what has been observed, it is manifest, that this is not the time for a Parliamentary Reform, but, on the contrary, the most improper time : And although some alteration may be admissible under the auspicious circumstances of national tranquillity, and confidence in Executive Government (the soul of every State) it is at present a SNARE which Ministers should avoid as

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they would the pestilence. Having nothing to fear from foreign enemies, they should look at domestic foes with courage, and remember, that "fear admitted into public councils, betrays like treason."

Plainly must it appear to every friend to this Country, that our Constitution requires (for the dignity, the prosperity, and security of the Nation) that the present groundless ferment, cherished by hopes of a Parliamentary Reform, should be looked at boldly, and resisted with all the virtue and wisdom of national authority, which is wisely lodged not in the Sovereign alone, as an absolute Monarchy; or the People at large, as a democratic Supremacy; but in Executive Government: A Government admirably founded on *the principles of the Constitution and the Laws of the Land*, for the interest of the People, and the dignity of the State, which are the two great objects of a free, a happy, and powerful Nation.

I cannot enforce these remarks on the turbulent spirit of the times, or the cause assigned for it, and  
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the consequences of a national ferment, under pretence of a Parliamentary Reform, in language more applicable to the important subject, than by transcribing another passage of a well-written, and well-timed production, intitled, *The Importance of Preserving the Established System of Government.*

“ If the abuses and causes of discontent, whether real or pretended, exist not in the form and Constitution of the Government, (which is not pretended by any of the People of this Country, notwithstanding the gross misrepresentations of Paine) but in the œconomy and administration of it, nothing but madness or the more detestable intention of sacrificing to private selfish views every thing sacred and valuable in Society, could suggest even a *pretence* to violate and overthrow the Constitution itself. The abuses and calamities of a perverse administration of Government may be but temporary, and in their utmost extent can reach but few; and even in the worst administered Government these calamities must be mild and gentle, when compared with the all-violating misery, violence and outrage, that must

attend an attempt to overthrow by force even the weakest established Government.

“ Since, then, the most disastrous calamity that can befall any country, is the breach and subversion of its civil Government; of all objects in which human society are interested, none ought therefore to be held so sacred, to be viewed with such awful forbearance, as the fundamental Laws and Principles of the State, the established system and form of Government in any regular Society; every breach of which must certainly be atoned for by the blood of thousands. Hence, the most fatal pest that can be let loose upon any Country or People is, the man who dares attempt to embroil the public, to dissolve the bonds of civil union, and throw Society loose from the protection and restraint of Law. Every good citizen, every man not void of principle, will tremble at the thought; nor ought public vengeance to spare for a moment the man (whether a *Paine* or a *Catiline*) who, in sentiment or action, dares to point towards such a catastrophe.

“ Every

“ Every civil war, every attempt to subvert civil Government, recorded in history, will sufficiently attest the truth and justice of these observations in general ; and if we apply them to the present attempt to overthrow the power of that Government, so long and so happily established in this Country in particular, the unwarrantable rashness and precipitancy of the undertaking must even at first view strikingly appear. But if we take into the consideration the many natural advantages of the Constitution of that Government, above any that this or former ages can boast of, the happy and flourishing state of the Country under that Constitution, with the personal virtue and moderation of the present Prince on the Throne ; add, I say, all these considerations, and language must labour in vain to describe the folly, the madness, not to say, the impiety and wickedness of the attempt, whether it proceeds from the extravagant and impracticable system of *Paine*, or from an ill-timed wish for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.”

In the very extraordinary Petition of Mr.  
HORNE

HORNE TOOKE to the House of Commons, in February 1791, it is asserted, in contempt of truth and decency, that " a very great majority of " the House of Commons are not (as they ought " to be) elected by the Commons of this realm ; " and must therefore naturally and necessarily have " a bias and interest against a fair and real repre- " sentation of the People."

This positive and bold assertion of *prostitution* in the elector, of *corruption* in the elected, and of *injustice* to the People, comes without the shadow of a proof. In my turn I as positively affirm, that the whole House of Representatives are elected, on *the part* of the Commons of this realm, by the constituent Body, and therefore the representation must necessarily be a fair, real, and legal representation, constituting exactly such a popular authority, and producing such happy effects as the Constitution requires. As Mr. Tooke has not favored us with his proofs, I will give mine.

This Gentleman, like the rest of our Reformers, maintains the exploded doctrine of the Duke of  
Richmond,



Richmond, and contends, that "our Representatives are not chosen by the Commons," that is, by the collective Body of the great mass of the People. The fact is right, but the principle is wrong: Hence a very erroneous conclusion is drawn from false premises. They are not chosen by the Commons or the Community at large (as they ought not to be, because that choice would be illegal) but on *their part*, and *for their purposes*, by the constituent Body, which is the legal power; and if that popular authority is not incorruptible, how can that human imperfection be *totally* prevented? How can it be more effectually prevented than by an existing act against bribery and corruption? Where is perfection to be found? Are the noblest institutions, and the happiest establishments, without a fault in the principle, or a blemish in the execution? If we adhere to fundamental principles to preserve the Constitution, and to produce the happy effects intended by it, the wise purposes of the Constitution are attained, and the great end of Legislation and Government is answered. It is folly to dispute violently about the *means* of either spiritual or temporal happiness

while

while we not only possess it, but have the best security for our religious and civil Liberties.

It was finely and forcibly said by a great catholic poet, "For *modes* of faith let fools contend." The virulence of disputants, in either religion or politics, about the shadow while they possess the substance, may deprive them of the latter and substitute the former, of which we should have a melancholy instance in this Country, were we not to suppress the restless spirit of Reformists. Their means are calculated not to promote, but to destroy the end. "The friends to *reform* are friends "to *peace*, their principles can only be promoted "by peaceable means, they know of no other "method of obtaining the object they desire." The very reverse is the truth: For these *peaceable* Revolutionists, while they boast of *pacific* principles, sound the trumpet of sedition, and treasonably solicit, in the most earnest manner, the assembling a Convention to overthrow the Government, under a pretence of obtaining, *in a legal and constitutional method*, a full and effectual representation, by means the most illegal and unconstitutional,

stitutional, tending to inflame the minds of the People, to destroy the Peace and Constitution of the Nation, and to subvert that Representation which they affect to admire and support.

Their complaint is against a *contracted* constituent authority; but would a more *extended* election, from the sagacity and virtue of the multitude, cure the evil? Can it be supposed that the great mass of the People would be either more wise or more virtuous than the present constituent body; and that the head-strong, thoughtless, and *vicious* multitude, would possess better principles to resist, with stubborn *virtue*, the influx of wealth and the force of luxury? The idea offers a gross insult to the understanding of an enlightened Nation.

Whoever knows the strong passions, the unsteady principles, and the strange propensities of the giddy and restless multitude, must be sensible that they are more *incorruptible* than a contracted constituent body, qualified by restrictions of the Law to act up to the principles of the Constitu-

tion, as much as the "existing circumstances" will admit; for, notwithstanding the sarcasm of Opposition, I contend that "the existing circumstances" are the *Salus Populi*, or the great rule of conduct for Executive Government.

The Duke of Richmond (who contended for universality and equality, and the *wisdom* of short Parliaments, "for a frequent appeal to the great "body of the People") says, "*annual* Parliaments "by their *frequency* and by their *shortness* would "doubly operate for preventing corruption." There cannot be a greater error, since the reverse is manifest. Corruption which is the growth of luxury, must be strengthened and extended, in an age of luxury, in proportion to the frequency of the opportunity. And if we consider the annual return and increase of corruption, with the annual ferment, the shortness would doubly operate to promote corruption and endanger the Constitution.

The noble Duke grounds his curious system of universality and equality on "extending the right  
" of



“ of voting to every individual indiscriminately, to  
 “ persons of no property, paupers and vagabonds.”  
 A plan that would fill our minds with horror and  
 indignation, were it not too absurd to be seriously  
 thought of: For, whenever “ paupers and the  
 “ lowest orders of the People shall have an equal  
 “ right to vote with the first commoner in the  
 “ Kingdom,” according to the noble Duke’s  
 ideas, we shall fall into all the anarchy and con-  
 fusion not only of a democratic Republic, but of a  
 tyrannic Government, by mobs, tumults, and a  
 constant ferment, natural and inseparable from the  
 system which gives equality to the thoughtless and  
 restless multitude.

“ By my plan,” says the Duke of Richmond,  
 “ the *poorest* man in the Kingdom will have an  
 “ equal vote with the first, for the choice of the  
 “ person to whom he trusts *his all*; and I think he  
 “ ought to have that equal security from op-  
 “ pression.” That paupers, vagabonds, and the  
 vicious part of the community, should have the  
 same interest in Government as men of the first  
 property, the first talents, and the first character, is

contrary both to reason and to the maxims of all civilized Nations.

There is something truly ridiculous in the idea of "the pauper and vagabond *trusting their all* " only to persons of their own choice, and having "equal security" for property that has no existence with men of the first property. But as the case is not fairly stated, so it is not clearly understood. Men trust nothing of their private property to their delegates. It is a public trust of public property. It is the property of the Nation produced by the public revenue, arising from the wisdom of the constituted authorities. Indeed when that annual revenue is not sufficient for the purposes of the Nation, individuals contribute by taxation to supply the deficiency. But, although this contribution is left to the judgement of their representatives, they do not *trust all* their private property to them, nor grant more than a small portion of the advantages which they derive from the wisdom of the Government under which they live. Nor is this a private trust of an individual to an individual, but a public trust of the constituent to the representative body

body for the general purposes of the community at large.

“ The equal rights of men to security from  
 “ oppression and the enjoyment of life and liberty,  
 “ strikes me very forcibly as perfectly compatible  
 “ with the Constitution,” says the noble Duke. It  
 strikes my mind as forcibly; but that security  
 they must expect to find in the judicial and not  
 in the legislative power. The Law places all  
 men upon a footing, as being equally entitled to  
 substantial justice: But the legislature, though  
 general, universal, and impartial in its effects, is  
 necessarily, in its form, contracted by the collective  
 to the constituent body, which totally absorbs the  
 rights of the community at large, and renders the  
 great body or mass of the People passive without  
 any political existence whatever. The nonsense  
 of babbling and designing men about the equal  
 rights of the multitude from the purity of the  
 Constitution disgraces a common understanding.  
 The multitude cannot have any political rights or  
 political existence. When men enter into society  
 they constitute authorities, and thereby resign their  
 political



political rights to the Constitution, and their natural and social rights to the Law.

It is, therefore, manifest that the equal "rights of men to security from oppression and the enjoyment of life and liberty" is what the subjects of a free State claim from the Law and not from the Legislature. The Law and the Constitution are things as different as cause and effect. The Law is common to all, and the poorest has an equal right with the richest: But the Constitution is *contracted* to the legislative and executive jurisdictions with which the collective body has absolutely nothing to do, for their rights are totally absorbed by the constituent body of the People.

"The protection of property appears to me," says his Grace, "one of the most essential ends of society; and so far from injuring it by my plan of equality, I conceive it to be the only means of preserving it." Can the noble Duke be ferocious, in thinking a system of confusion, that levels all



all distinctions, creates a ferment by mobs and tumults, and gives to the pauper, the vagabond, and the vicious, equal weight with the wealthiest, the ablest, and the best members of the community, the best security for property? Let him put his hand to his breast and ask his own heart, whether it would be the best security for his own great property?

The equality of protection, and the equal preservation of property, are rights to be enjoyed in common, without distinction of property, or rank, or merit; but that *glorious equality of a free State* is, I say again, to be found in the Law, and not in the Legislature: In the former all men are equal, in the latter they can never be by any system of Government whatever. It would supersede all the constituted powers of the State, and defeat all the good purposes for which men enter into society, and delegate their rights, by constituting authorities for the interest and security of the whole. Even in France equality is a pretence, a delusion, a bubble, a political juggle, to catch the passions of the multitude. Under the idea of equality and  
fraternity,

fraternity, is there not the greatest *inequality* between the body of the People and the authorities constituted by the National Convention? Was that *equality* real, would so many be sacrificed to the *supremacy* of usurpers?

It is evident that the Duke of Richmond, through the whole of his system of universality, equality and fraternity, has confounded the Legislature with the Law, and by making no distinction, he mistakes the one for the other; and has, for want of discrimination, led the Public into the great error of supposing, that because the poorest subject has an equal right with the richest to the Law, so he has also an equal right to the Legislature.

To correct this great error, let it ever be remembered, that the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, are constituted, and that the great body or mass of the People is not a *constituent* power. The collective is ever absorbed by the constituent power, and that for a time by the representative. The equal rights which have been

so grossly misrepresented by Reformists, and misunderstood by the People at large, are in the Law and not in the Legislature : It is in the former that they are to look for their equal protection from oppression ; for the equal security of Property ; for the equal enjoyment of Life and Liberty ; the blessings of our happy Constitution in common to all without distinction. In this manner the rights of the People are equal, and as that *equality* is fully admitted, so I am happy to say, it is as fully enjoyed from the universality and impartiality of the Law.

Mr. Horne Tooke, in a slight Treatise upon the subject of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, says, with exultation, that “ he is sanguine enough to believe that we are at the eve “ of a *peaceable* Revolution, more important than “ any which has happened since the settlement of “ our Saxon ancestors in this Country ; and which “ will convey down to endless posterity all the “ blessings of which political society is capable.” God forbid we should be “ at the eve of a REVOLUTION,” because there absolutely does

not exist any of the causes which produced the glorious one in the last Century to occasion it! The whole assertion is false, and the propagation of a falsehood so contagious in its nature, and so alarming in its tendency to the public tranquillity and security, is both the grossest libel and the greatest reproach to our Government; which, by its silence and mistaken lenity, exhibits an instance of great imbecility and impolicy.

As a REVOLUTION in the mildest reign and best administration is causeless, so instead of unparalleled  *blessings*  it would occasion the unexampled  *curses*  it has produced in France. I am at a loss to conceive what he means by "a  *peaceable*  Revolution." Does he think that a Revolution founded on the system of the French and the subversion of our Government would be a  *peaceable*  event? Is he serious in affirming that such a sacrifice of our most excellent Constitution, such a surrender of the happiness we enjoy under our unparalleled legislature, such a triumph to anarchy and confusion, with the dreadful calamity they have produced in France, would be "the most important

" tant



“ tant Revolution, big with all the blessings which  
 “ Society can wish to enjoy ?” To use an expression  
 of the late Lord Mansfield, “ the man must be  
 “ wrong in his head.”

This eccentric Politician, this Apostate from the  
 Church, argues thus : “ I shall not waste a word to  
 “ shew the *necessity* of a Reform in the Representa-  
 “ tion of this Country, because I believe it is  
 “ generally admitted. I shall only consider the  
 “ *mode* of Reform ; and endeavour to shew that it  
 “ is not difficult to embrace every interest in the  
 “ State, and to satisfy well meaning men of every  
 “ description.”

How this general interest and general satisfaction  
 are shewn, will appear from the following curious  
 specimen of Parliamentary Reform. “ My vir-  
 “ tuous friend MAJOR CARTWRIGHT is a  
 “ zealous and an able Advocate for *equal* and  
 “ *universal* Representation ; that is, for an *equal*  
 “ and *universal* share of every man in the Govern-  
 “ ment.”

The Major may be an honest man and understand his own profession, but he is a weak Reasoner and a shallow Politician, contending for *equal* and *universal* Representation without comprehending the meaning of those words and the difference between them. *Universal* suffrage and *equal* representation are as different as the poles are opposite. The one is the right of Delegation, the other the effect of Representation; and when these different terms are blended, the distinction is lost to the Public, and the minds of the People are misguided by sounds. The People have an equal right to the benefit of Representation (or the constitutional share of Legislation) to the blessings of the Constitution, and to the protection of the Law; but this does not imply an *universal* share, or the equal right of every man, in the Government of their Country: That is a principle of equality which was never claimed in any Society, and which is too absurd to merit a serious consideration. And as they have an equal right to those blessings of a free State so they enjoy them equally; for the representative and legal powers are universal, impartial, and consequently equal in their effects,

effects, whatever may be the form. And here it is important to observe, that if the happy effects of a free State are impartially distributed, universally felt, and equally enjoyed, which I maintain is the present state of the Nation, the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform totally ceases, and it becomes the interest of the Nation to explode the doctrine and resist the measure.

Mr. Tooke says, " I conceive the Major's argument to be this: Every man has an equal right to freedom and security." Granted. *Every man has an equal right to the benefit of the Constitution and to the security of the Laws:* That is, for the enjoyment of life and security of property we must look to the Law and not to the Legislature. " No man can be free who has not a voice in the framing of those Laws by which he is to be governed." Granted; with this distinction: *Not a voice of his own but a voice first through the constituent and then the representative Body.* " He who is not represented has not this voice." Granted. / That was the case of America; but it is absolutely not the case of either England or Scotland; for  
every

every man in this Country is virtually or effectually and equally represented, although every man in the Kingdom has not nor cannot have a vote. Hence the difference (though the distinction is never made) between the universal, equal, and impartial *benefits* of Representation, and the equal and universal *right* of constituting Representation !

The Major maintains that " every man has an " equal right to Representation, or to a share in " the Government." But here is a very great difference without a distinction. The People have certainly an equal right to the advantages of Representation, because it is the democratic part of Legislation and their own share of the Constitution; but they have not an equal right to a share in the Government. The one is *legislative* in which they are deeply interested; the other *executive* with which they have nothing to do, because it is the prerogative of the Crown. If his final conclusion is that " every man has a right to an " equal share in Representation, or in other words " to be equally represented, for the great purpose " of enjoying equally the blessings of the Constitu-  
" tion



“tion and the security of the Law,” he is perfectly right ; but if he means, by confounding the words *equal* and *universal*, “nothing less than “giving to every man in the Kingdom a vote to “create universal suffrage, or the share or right “of every man to the Legislature,” he is absolutely wrong.

Indeed this is candidly and liberally admitted by Mr. Tooke, who says—“I trust that there are “very few persons in this Kingdom who desire so “improper and impracticable a measure.” The reason is obvious: The aggregate body or great mass of the People (whose support Reformists earnestly implore) have absolutely no political existence, as I have observed. If they had where would be the use of their constituent and constituted authorities? The People at large are constitutionally passive. The constituent power absorbs the right and silences the voice of the collective Body, who tacitly resign their interest in the choice of representatives to that authority, and the constituent, by virtue thereof, delegates it to the representative in trust for the whole, that is,

in

in the name and for the purposes of the Community at large. Hence it is evident that the constituent and constituted authorities are fair, legal, and constitutional; and that Representation is full, effectual and universal, producing equally and impartially the blessings of the Constitution and the security of the Law!

Now since Mr. Tooke has not shewn "the necessity of a Reform in the Representation of this Country," nor "the mode of Reform," were it necessary, although it be said, "arguments are not wanting to shew the importance and absolute necessity of a full and fair Representation of the People of Great-Britain;" yet as those arguments have not been produced, or are likely to be produced (for the reasons I have assigned) to shew that the people are *not* fully, legally, and effectually represented, it may fairly be concluded that the necessity does not exist, and that all the modes of Parliamentary Reform are as inadequate as they are unnecessary.

Indeed this popular subject seems to be either  
grossly

grossly misrepresented by Reformists, or greatly mistaken by the Public. The right and benefit of Representation are so blended and confounded, as to be perverted by Party and mistaken by the People. There is a very great difference between an equal right to the benefit of Representation, and an equal right to constitute Representation: And in this consists the whole difference upon the subject of a Parliamentary Reform. The simple question is, whether we shall be satisfied with the present *constituent power*, qualified by the restrictions of the Law to act up to the principles of the Constitution, which has produced all the happiness and security we enjoy; or whether we shall relinquish these blessings and hazard innovation, by making the constituent Body universal, or as extended as the collective Body, and substituting that greatest of all curses, the right of every man to vote for Representation? Can any man, who is deeply interested in the happiness of his Country, hesitate in the choice and support of the former system? And can any but such as have an interest in betraying the People, and subverting the Constitution, prefer the latter to overthrow

our excellent Government, and bring upon this Country the political contagion and calamities of France?

That "freedom and security ought to be equal and universal," cannot, for a moment, be doubted. It is a principle of public justice arising from the common right of the Community. I not only subscribe to the truth of the assertion, but I contend, without fear of contradiction, that the People of this Country enjoy universally and equally the blessings of their Constitution and Law, or the happy effects of Liberty and Security to an enviable degree, as appears from the principle of EQUALITY in Laws that level all distinctions. And if this be the glorious effect of Legislation (whatever may be the cause or form) the complaint of partiality and injustice to the People at large can exist only in the distempered imagination of persons disaffected to our Government, and inimical to our Constitution.

To avoid the imputation of presumption, by writing so fully, and perhaps redundantly upon this subject,



subject, and for stemming the tide of popular infatuation and the torrent of party delusion, I admit, with the greatest respect, that many politicians have spoken ably, and written forcibly upon the subject: But—*Cui Bono?* Have not their well-informed minds since been convinced, that instead of reforming the Parliament, *the Parliament should reform itself*—by regulating the constituent Body? Those enlightened Statesmen, with virtue for their object, and truth for their guide, will not, I hope, take offence at my presuming to think that the doctrine hitherto maintained, with so much ability, “of a Reform of Parliament” was not orthodox. Adverting to the *effect*, without attending to the *cause*, defeats the salutary purpose by beginning at the wrong end. I humbly conceive that the REFORM should begin with the *constituent* Body, from which arises all the defect of the Constitution, and all the corruption so much complained of against the representative Body, commonly called the House of Commons.

Notwithstanding all that has been said of a Parliamentary Reform, and all that has been ex-

pected from it, it seems to be as clear as any mathematical demonstration that the *cause* should precede the *effect*; and, consequently, that the creative power of delegation should be clearly ascertained as the first and most essential step for reforming the power of Representation. If, therefore, the Public are to be gratified with some legislative alteration, let it be done in such a manner as shall at once *ascertain the right of the constituent Body, and be productive of great advantage to the revenue*. This measure of public utility is founded on a *popular* principle; since whatever increases the public stock, lessens the necessity of taxation and the burthen of industry.

As the high authority and the happy effects of Parliament manifestly arise from that creative power, it is clearly the first and great object of Representation to ascertain that right: For, what can be so necessary as that the power of Delegation should be clearly understood and wisely fixed, prior to that of Representation, which arises from it?

To

To ascertain the right of the Electors, so that it may be clearly understood, and not abused for any private or party purpose, is a great object to the People, and indeed their greatest object; and to make it conducive, by a *general register* of that Body, to the purposes of revenue, is as great an object to Executive Government.

Were instances wanting of the absolute necessity of a Reform of the constituent Body, we have one in the city of Westminster, which is the residence of the first characters in the kingdom, whose splendid talents and patriotic principles would do honor to the most polished State, and to the most enlightened age. The evil calls aloud to the Guardians of the Nation for a remedy; and to their honor, as well as to that of a most able and active executive power, the voice of the Public, like the voice of God, will be attended to, if report speaks true.

Whenever that happy period arrives, to remove the alarming evil, by *fixing the right of election in Westminster* clearly and permanently, by a plan  
that

that shall *raise a large sum of money for the public service*, it will not be only a proud day for the peace and good order of the city and liberty of Westminster, but a day of joy to the whole Nation, as so wise and productive a measure will, undoubtedly, become general.

For instance: " Every inhabitant of the city  
 " and liberty of Westminster, whether housekeeper  
 " or lodger, who shall have qualified, within a  
 " time to be limited by the wisdom of Parliament,  
 " by *the purchase of his freedom* (the Peers ex-  
 " cepted) shall, on producing such qualification  
 " duly stamped, which is another advantage to  
 " the revenue by the increase of stamps, have a  
 " right to vote for Representatives for West-  
 " minster. A public register will detect coun-  
 " terfeits. I propose that the qualification shall  
 " not become hereditary, by descending from  
 " father to son, or from master to apprentice, as  
 " in London, but that it shall be renewed by every  
 " generation: And, by consequence, all other in-  
 " habitants, whether housekeepers or inmates,  
 " shall, by this regulation, be disqualified as having  
 " no



“ no right to vote at the election of Members of  
“ Parliament for the said city and liberty.”

Here is, in my apprehension, a remedy for bribery and perjury, and for all the moral and political evils attending them.

The *constituent* Body, which we are now so much to seek for, to the reproach of Government, and to the disgrace of an enlightened age, will then boldly stand upon RECORD with justice and perspicuity, by a general register of the Electors, to which the parties concerned may easily have recourse.

What can be fairer than the principle, or happier than the tendency? In the former the People will have the best security for their dearest right; and in the latter Government will have the best means of raising money for the public service, by voluntary contribution, and consequently without burthening those who are unable to pay it.

The vast expence of petitions to Parliament, on  
account

account of illegal returns, would be reduced to nothing. The points on which these contests generally turn are the qualifications of Electors, under the numberless restrictions the present Laws have imposed, which require the attendance of witnesses, the production of records, and are subject to infinite dispute, ill will, trouble, and expence. But when no other qualification shall be necessary but that of being a *registered* Voter, there can be nothing left to contend upon as to the right of Electors to vote: And one measure of the soundest policy will abrogate and for ever put an end to innumerable legal decisions.

Surely this plan is preferable to that of the Duke of Richmond, which (without producing the smallest advantage to Government) "extends the right of voting to every individual without distinction, to persons of no property, and even to *paupers and vagabonds*." A plan that would fill our minds with horror and indignation, were it not too absurd to be seriously thought of. I anticipate my respectful congratulations on an event so destructive to confusion and vice, and so conducive to

to good order and virtue, by which the happy effects of well-regulated and peaceable Elections will equally promote the great object of a free People, and the great purpose of revenue.

I think I see the early effects of this sound policy, in an overflow of the People coming to the office established for that great purpose, to take out their freedom, to qualify them to vote for Representatives for Westminster, as the East-India Proprietors qualify to vote for Representatives in the Direction. What an acquisition of property, by voluntary contribution, to lessen the necessity of taxes ! What an accumulating fund for the purposes of such an Administration as the present, who improve the revenue with the best principle, and apply it with the happiest effect !

The extent, the trade, the opulence of Westminster, and the consequence to which it is rapidly advancing, from the wealth and rank of numerous inhabitants, the public offices, and the overflow of wealthy commercial people from the east of London and from abroad, seems to render

this method of choosing their Representatives upon the long established and peace promoting principle of the city of London, very eligible, both in regard to the money it will produce, and the peace and good order, so much wanted, which it will permanently establish.

How well this method of raising money for the public service, by voluntary contribution, and promoting peace and good order at Elections, which is so great a moral and political object (for the present licentious state of the constituent Body is a burlesque upon our admired Constitution, a mockery of Liberty with the mask of Licentiousness, an insult to all Government, and a reproach equally to Church and State). How well a measure of such a tendency applies to other places I do not presume to say; but I am of opinion, that whenever the great objects which my regulation for Westminster embraces are understood, and the happy effects are felt, equally by the convenience of the People and the advantage of the revenue, it will lead to a general Reform of the constituent Body upon the principle that I have had the honor

to



to suggest, as the best security for Representation and the greatest advantage to Government, and consequently as the best plan for a Parliamentary Reform, which is so much desired, but, in my humble opinion, not so well understood.

An innovation in the democratic part of our Legislature is an event to be dreaded as a political pestilence, since it would convulse and endanger the whole frame of our most excellent Constitution; but such a regulation as shall, by a *general register*, fix the qualification of Electors throughout the kingdom, and make them, by a *purchase* of that qualification, raise a considerable fund for the salutary purposes of the State, is an event of great public utility, and a measure that is manifestly necessary, both as it will ascertain the right of the constituent Body, and operate as a material REFORM of the delegated power of Representation called the Parliament.

Now, although it will appear, from what I have said, that I do not admit the DISORDER in the democratic share of our Legislature, or the popular

lar part of our Government, to be of the nature and tendency described by OPPOSITION for the purposes of Party; and I contend, as a necessary consequence, that there absolutely does not exist a necessity for the REMEDY they propose; yet, as a vast influx of wealth and accession of national dignity must have a powerful effect on the institutions as well as the manners of this Country, as those causes have produced and will ever produce in the wisest and most powerful Nations; I repeat that (although the legislative INNOVATION will, at a period so alarming as the present, *tear up the rights of the People and the security of their property by the roots*, by producing a political contagion dreadful to think of from the calamity of France) there must ever exist in a free State *a constitutional remedy proportionate to the inconvenience which the Nation may feel.*

If therefore, we have sagacity and resolution enough to avoid the precipitancy of rash Reformers, who inflame the minds of the People to convulse the Nation, a well timed and gradual application of that remedy will effectually cure the evil.

evil. In the mean time I have offered some CONSOLATION by a plan to prevent the confusion, the bribery, and perjury of elections (the cause of great disorder and the source of great inquietude) and to raise a considerable fund for the Public service: And I have the vanity to think that the suppression of those great evils, which have so long disgraced the Government of this Country and been a libel on our Constitution, and the happy consequences of meliorating and facilitating the *constituent* part of democracy, will more effectually reform that part of the Legislature than any plan which has hitherto been suggested for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

I cannot take leave of this great subject, with which the Public are so much amused and the minds of the People so much agitated, without saying a word concerning the steps which the MINORITY, commonly called the OPPOSITION, have taken in England, Scotland, and Ireland, for the purposes of Party to perplex the measures of Executive Government under an Administration of acknowledged abilities and great merit;

merit; who, though not always able, like the greatest Generals, to command success, are always deserving of it, from the purity of their intentions and the ardor of their zeal for the interest and dignity of the Empire.

The Convention, or Association in England (in which I see, with concern, some Members of the Legislature) affecting to make "the preservation of the Constitution, on its true principles, the foundation of all their proceedings," very unfortunately ground their proceedings on principles that subvert the Constitution and on measures that tend to overthrow the Government of their Country. The Society calling themselves "FRIENDS of the PEOPLE, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform," maintain doctrines as dangerous as they are delusive: The delusion held out to the People is great, and the danger to Government is beyond calculation. They wish "to restore the *freedom* of Election" before it is violated; and "to establish a more *equal* Representation of the People in Parliament," although Representation is general



ral and impartial, and by consequence *equal*; for whatever is admitted to have a general and impartial tendency must be equal in its *effects* whatever may be the form. With this view they wish for "a more *frequent* exercise of the People's right " of electing their Representatives;" although they know that the right is properly exercised, and that a more frequent appeal to the Public would tend to the purposes of Party more than to the purity of the Legislature. It is therefore manifest that these two pillars, upon which a Parliamentary Reform is to be supported, are like "the baseless fabric of "a vision:" They are imaginary causes and are conducive to the most delusive consequences. And yet the Affociators declare, that "on their steady "adherence to these purposes" (which are truly visionary) "they look with a just confidence to "the approbation and support of the People in "the prosecution of their object; because a measure so likely to be opposed by the united "strength of various interests" (no proof of its utility and expediency) "can never succeed but "by the declared and hearty concurrence of the "Nation."

Can

Can any thing be so preposterous or so alarming to Government? If measures of State can never succeed but by a desperate appeal to the mass of the People for support, as in France, they can never be attempted but with the greatest possible danger to the constituent and constituted authorities of the Nation. An Association of this sort wears the mask of hypocrisy and treachery, and is the grossest libel on the Legislature and the greatest mockery of Government. This self-created Society maintains such principles as endanger the tranquillity and security of the Nation: And the very attempt at such a system, or the bare profession of principles so inimical to our Government and Constitution, is a threat to convulse the Nation and overthrow our happy establishments in Church and State, that should be boldly resisted and punished, as a traiterous design and a treasonable system against the interest and security of our Country.

Under a delusive design of reforming the Legislature and repairing the Constitution it is an invitation, after the manner of the French, to the  
mass

mass of the People (who have absolutely nothing to do with matters of State) to be dissatisfied with their Government, and to alter their Legislature and Constitution for the purposes of Party. The design is big with mischief, and the danger arising from such an illegal Association, and from such unconstitutional doctrines is so manifest, that the members, however dignified by rank or distinguished by property, are criminal and punishable for publishing principles as unnecessary as they are subversive of good order and constitutional authority.

The Associators who stile themselves the FRIENDS of the PEOPLE, tell us that " Lord Chatham declared in the House of Lords that " by his proposed Reform he meant *to infuse a portion of new health into the Constitution.*" This puts me in mind of the Spanish traveller at Rome who, with a vigorous constitution, was prevailed upon by a quack, " *to infuse a new portion of health into his constitution,*" which was the cause of his death, and on which event the following *memento* was descriptive of his credulity and folly. " By



“unnecessarily and rashly *reforming* a good constitution I am in my grave.” The body politic is like the body natural. The state empiric, like the quack in physic, instead of infusing a new portion of health, to invigorate the constitution, infuses the poison of his nostrums to destroy it. The inconsistency of the one is as great as the ignorance of the other. For instance: “WE DENY THE  
 “EXISTENCE OF ANY RESEMBLANCE  
 “WHATEVER BETWEEN OUR DESIGN  
 “AND THE REVOLUTION OF FRANCE:  
 “AND WE UTTERLY DISCLAIM THE  
 “NECESSITY OF RESORTING TO SIMI-  
 “LAR REMEDIES.”

But, although they deny the necessity, they resort to the same principles, and invite the great mass of the People to the same measures to subvert our Constitution and Government, as have produced that dreadful event in France! They tell us that “the discontents in that Country were  
 “converted into despair. The subversion of the  
 “ancient Government ensued. The inference  
 “from this comparison is at once so strong that  
 “they



“ they know not by what argument to illustrate or “ enforce it.” Here these jesuitical Associators take off the mask: For, what can be plainer or bolder than this language? What more unjust and criminal, when we consider that there was not the least resemblance in the monarchical Governments of the two Nations, nor any of the causes in this Country which provoked the Revolution in France?

But notwithstanding this strong language and the glaring injustice of it (by which we cannot mistake the revolutionary principles and bold designs of the Reformists) these consistent and modest gentlemen affirm that “ they mean to avert “ for ever from our Country the calamities inseparable from these convulsions;” at the very time that they are struggling to rouse the passions of the Nation by a rash and unconstitutional appeal to the restless multitude, or the great mass of the People, for their support to resist and overthrow the established system of Government, which cannot fail of producing the dreadful “ con-

“vulsions and calamities they mean to avert for  
“ever from their Country !”

Their inconsistency and ignorance are as conspicuous as their injustice and criminality ; for, if  
“the discontents of an arbitrary Government  
“were so oppressive as to be converted into des-  
“pair,” the very reverse is the case of a free and  
mild Government, which has procured us all the  
blessings of Liberty and the security of Property ;  
and which excellent Government admits, nay  
contends (against the false friends of the Nation)  
that *the People have a natural, a legal, and constitu-  
tional right to dispose of their private property as they  
please*, in a manner that is not injurious to the  
State or to hereditary right. This is not an empty  
declaration from the executive power, but the  
great blessing of Liberty fully enjoyed under the  
mild and wise Government of a free State.

There is then no comparison nor any inference,  
that the subversion of a despotic Government  
should require the overthrow of a free and mild  
one adapted to the genius, the prosperity, and hap-  
piness

piness of the People governed. Then can there be a stronger resemblance to the principles of France than the avowed purposes of the society styling itself "The Friends of the People?" Can there be a stronger declaration of resorting to the same measures? or can any thing shew a greater necessity than that resemblance and declaration on the part of Executive Government, to prevent the contagion of such alarming principles in England, Scotland, and Ireland?

As a constitutional writer, inclining to the spirit of a Sydney, a Hampden, and a Chatham, I am liberal enough to suppose that, in general, the People of the three Kingdoms (I mean the true Republic, and not the thoughtless and restless multitude) *mean well*; but I cannot admit that, in all cases, they *think right*: "A Parliamentary Reform to obtain universal suffrage and annual Parliaments," is an instance in which I think the public voice is greatly mistaken; and discovers more the passions of party, and the designs of restless men to subvert our excellent Government, than a knowledge of and a regard for our unparalleled



leled Constitution; of which I will give another instance from a late meeting of the Society called "The FRIENDS of the PEOPLE."

"First resolution. That the People have a  
 "right to the pure, genuine, and uncorrupted  
 "energy of the English Constitution, faithfully  
 "administered according to its own acknowledged  
 "principles." This jargon is the veriest bombast. It can only mean that the Nation should preserve the fundamental principles of their Constitution, as the security of their liberty and property, by as just an equipoise of the Legislature as circumstances will, from time to time, admit: Indeed this is all that is meant by the Constitution itself, and all that can be expected from it. And let me appeal to the honest breast of every candid man, and ask, whether this is not the present state of Representation and Legislation? The Crown may have an influence with the Peers, and they with the People, from the influx of wealth and the force of luxury; but that ascendancy will never, I hope, preponderate so much as to endanger fundamental principles, to shake the Constitution, and  
 alarm



alarm the People for the security of their liberty and property, a blessing which was never enjoyed better than at the present period, and proves more than volumes the happiness we enjoy under our excellent Government, and the criminality of disturbing it by speculative and hazardous innovations.

“ Last resolution. That the People of this  
 “ Country ought not to be taxed but by the con-  
 “ sent of Representatives chosen by the free suf-  
 “ frages of the People, independent of the Crown  
 “ and the Peers.” This I admit; but, like the  
 first resolution, it proves nothing: For I maintain  
 that the People are *not* taxed but by consent of  
 Representatives, chosen by the *free suffrages* of the  
 constituent Body. The Constituent is free to  
 make his choice; and if he suffers his mind to be  
 influenced, the fault, if any, is not in the Repre-  
 sentative, but the constituent Body. And in a  
 more extended Representation it would not be  
 cured, since the same cause would produce the  
 same effects. And who can say that a Represen-  
 tative so legally chosen, is not as fit a person as

one chosen without that influence? I do therefore contend, that "the People are taxed by consent of Representatives freely and legally chosen." The suffrage is free, that is, the choice of Representatives is of itself independent, but the most independent man may be advised, and suffer his mind to be influenced by that advice: But that influence does not prove corruption to destroy the freedom of Election.

These principal reasons being refuted, the designs of restless men are discovered, like incendiaries, to arise from inflammatory party motives, tending to promote their own purposes at the hazard of every thing dear to their Country. The well-disposed and valuable part of the Nation must, therefore, be fully convinced that the proposed INNOVATION (at all times extremely hazardous) must be, in a particular manner at this period, subversive of our happy establishments in Church and State.

A LEGISLATIVE REFORM is indeed so analogous with a NATIONAL REVOLUTION  
and

and a subversion of the established Government, that it is at all times to be dreaded as an event of infinite hazard; and the more so at a period, like the present, in which the spirit of resistance and emancipation from the control of necessary authority (from the contagion of French principles) is so restless as to require the utmost care of a wise Government to prevent the mischief it threatens, from the terrible example of a great neighbouring Nation. This restless spirit and dreadful example before our eyes have led me, as I think they should every person enjoying the blessings of our excellent Government, to condemn the unnecessary and dangerous proceedings of the English Association, called "The FRIENDS of the PEOPLE." And the same impulse of public zeal induces me, as a duty I owe to my Country, to condemn the SCOTTISH CONVENTION, which, like its prototype, has all the seeds of French fanaticism, and is big with all the horrors which their frantic system of usurpation, folly and tyranny, has produced in France.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew that the advocates for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM are greatly mistaken; and that there does not exist a necessity for the measure: I have also attempted to shew that this measure, so obstinately and absurdly insisted upon by the MINORITY, would be as impolitic as it is unnecessary, because it would unhinge our Government, convulse the Nation, destroy public credit and national confidence and security, and produce the political pestilence that pervades France.

F I N I S.